

Study and Comparison of Academic Adjustment of Athletes and Non-athletes First-year University Students

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ABSTRACT

Adjustment and its dimensions are fundamental and widespread issues in psychology. Therefore identify of factors associated with it, can increase the knowledge, and reduce personal and interpersonal problems. In this context, the aim of the present study was study and comparison of academic adjustment of athletes and non-athletes first-year university students. For this purpose, 240 subjects of first-year university students (120 athletes and 120 non-athletes) selected from Mohageg Ardabil university using random sampling. To collect the information were used Inventory of personal information and Baker and Siryk Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ). The results showed significant differences between academic adjustment of athletic students and non-athletic students. Based on the findings of this study, It can be concluded that exercise and physical activity have effect on academic adjustment in the first year university students. Thus, by encouraging students to participate in sports and physical activity they can be overcome the problems of their academic and achieve better academic adjustment.

KEYWORDS: Academic adjustment, athletes, non-athletes, first-year university students

1. INTRODUCTION

The demand for higher education has increased throughout the world. The transition from high school to college is a major change in the lives of a major group of teenagers. Going to university is an opportunity for more learning and mental development[1]. However, for some it is a sources of stress and leads to maladaptive responses. University is a new environment that first-year students may react to it differently. Thus, the first year of life in university can be exciting and challenging [2]. Increased personal freedoms can be both exciting and scary. Going to university offers an opportunity to students to become more independent and self-reliant. In addition, parental control is lower in this period and students will be faced with new freedoms [3]. 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[4]. Bad adaptation to student life may force students to drop out. University conditions is greatly different from school conditions [3].

In psychology, adjustment is assumed a more or less conscious process based on which a person adapts to the social, natural, and cultural environments. This adjustment requires a person to change themselves or actively make changes in the surrounding environment, so that the result is a harmony between a person and the environment [5].

Adjustment consists of different dimensions. Sinha & Singh have divided adjustment into three categories including academic adjustment, social adjustment, and emotional adjustment [6]. The present study merely focuses on academic adjustment which is defined as the ability of a student to manage and

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control educational conditions in the new situation. Academic adjustment involves the ability of a student to comply with regulations, lessons, acquisition of new ways of learning, attendance, and study programs. In addition, creating and keeping the motivation for presence in university, academic purposefulness, no hesitation about the value of university, doing the educational duties, regular study, active attendance in classes, and mastery over reading and learning lessons are some of features of academic adjustment [7]. When first-year students face academic, social, personal, and lifestyle challenges in student life, they get anxious [8]. Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) argue that most students need adaptation to academic habits and expectations for the transition into the university classrooms. First-year students will soon find that in university competition is more intense, classrooms are bigger, there is more homework, teachers use different teaching styles, volume and frequency of works are higher, and the standards are higher. Therefore, newcomer students need study harder, change their study habits, and reset their priorities in order to respond to new demands [9].

Nowadays, exercise and physical activities are viewed not only as a way to spend leisure time but also as an unavoidably necessity for physical and mental health [10]. Exercise and regular physical activities positively affect both physical health and psychological, mental and social health.

Currently, there are increasing common knowledge and awareness that physical activity and regular exercise are beneficial for human health. Recent studies indicate the effective role of exercise and regular physical activity in mental health of human communities [11].

Today, most of the world's educational centers (schools and universities) put a special emphasis on sports and physical education, because it can both ensure the physical and mental health of students and also increases the probability of their academic success. The results of scientific research have shown that athlete students are more successful in their study than non-athlete ones [12].

In addition, as exercise creates coordination between a person and team members or with the instructor, it can greatly affect adjustment. Adjustment is a dynamic process; each person responds to the environment and changes occurring in. Determining the extent to which a person can adapt to the environment and its changes depends on two factors; one is personal characteristics including skills, attitudes, and physical moods and another is situations a person may encounter, such as family conflicts, conflicts in educational environment, etc. These two factors together are effective in adjustment, satisfaction, success, and failure. As environment and people are changing, adjustment should be based on these two factors [13]. Adjustment is one of the key factors of success in various areas of job, society, etc. One of the positions in which adjustment can a key factor for success is education and academic study. Academic adjustment refers to the ability of learners to comply with the conditions and requirements of education and playing the roles that school or university, as social institutions, assign to them [14].

Baker & Siryk (1984) believe that academic adjustment is a multidimensional concept and refers to the ability to successfully respond to various and diverse demands of educational environments. In other words, they state that academic adjustment is the satisfaction with educational environment and doing the activities that increase effective academic performance, such as planning, interest in education, and participation in discussions and extracurricular programs [15].

Habibi (2010) conducted a study entitled "comparison of academic, social, and emotional adjustment between athlete and non-athlete female students" and showed that there is a significant difference between athlete and non-athlete female students in all three adjustment, as athlete female students showed better performance in these three types of adjustment than non-athlete ones [16]. Tuija *et al.* (2005) stated that there is a significant difference between athlete and non-athlete adolescents in social adjustment [17].

Few studies have been conducted in Iran on adjustment and especially academic adjustment and most studies have been restricted to teenagers and students. Since exercise is one of the most important factors in creating harmony and cooperation among the members of a sports team and also between team members and their coach, it can be an effective factor in creating adjustment, especially academic

adjustment. Hence, the present study aims to compare athlete and non-athlete first-year university students in terms of academic adjustment.

2. METHODOLOGY

The present research is a post-event descriptive, causal-comparative research. Statistical population included all first-year students of Mohaghegh Ardebili University in the second semester of academic year 2013-2014 in Iran. 240 students (120 athletes and 120 non-athletes) were selected as the sample by random sampling method. Athlete students were selected from members of sports teams of this universities in sports like futsal, volleyball, basketball, handball, badminton, table tennis, and chess. The required data were collected using personal information questionnaire and Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), which is developed by Baker & Siryk (1984) and consists of 24 items. The minimum and maximum scores a subject can gain on this questionnaire are 24 and 168, respectively, and higher scores indicate higher adjustment. Psychometric features of SACQ have been evaluated in many studies. In a study conducted by Baker & Siryk (1984), Cronbach's alpha coefficient for academic adjustment subscale was obtained more than 0.80. In a study by Zareiy *et al.* (2012) on nursing students in Islamic Azad University of Khoy, this figure was equal to 0.834[6]. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this questionnaire was calculated 0.82. The obtained data were analyzed by independent t-test.

3. RESULTS

Table 1 present the description of collected data. The results of independent t-test showed that there is a significant difference between athlete and non-athlete first-year students in terms of academic adjustment ($p < 0.038$), as athlete first-year students exhibited higher academic adjustment. Academic adjustment of male athlete students was higher than female ones, but the difference was not significant. Also, no significant difference was observed between academic adjustment of male and female non-athlete students.

Table 1. Academic Adjustment means±SD Values for Athlete and Non-athlete students

	N	X±SD	P
Athlete students	140	128.27±14.37	0.038*
Non-athlete students	140	98.81±26.87	
Female athlete students	68	126.36±15.23	0.167
Male athlete students	72	130.67±14.45	
Female non-athlete students	67	97.17±37.16	1.059
Male non-athlete students	73	99.14±13.16	

* $P < .05$

SD: Standard deviation

4. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to compare athlete and non-athlete first-year university students in terms of academic adjustment. After entering the university, a person's previous adjustments will be changed and he/she should try to adapt to the features and conditions of new environment. While some of students quickly adapt to university and its requirements, some others are faced with difficulties in separating themselves from previous relationships and adaption to social and academic life [18]. The results of the

present study indicate that academic adjustment takes place better in athlete students than non-athlete ones. This is consistent with the findings of Habibi (2010)[16]. Since exercise is one of the most important factors in creating harmony and cooperation among the members of a sports team and also between team members and their coach, it can be an effective factor in creating adjustment, especially academic adjustment.

The results of this study also showed that academic adjustment of male athlete students was higher than female ones, but the difference was not significant. This result is consistent with the findings of Banikhaled (2010)[19] but inconsistent with the findings of E'Obi (2012)[20] and Enochs & Renk (2006)[21] who found a significant difference between male and female students in terms of academic adjustment. This conflict could be attributed to academic adjustment measurement tool and cultural differences.

The results of this study suggested that academic adjustment in athlete students is higher than non-athlete ones. Given the impact of exercise on social, mental, and biological issues like interaction, compatibility, fatigue tolerance, increased self-confidence, and anxiety and stress control, this result was not far-fetched, because adjustment is influenced by social, mental, and biological factors. Negative affect resulting from social problems can hinder the process of adjustment by posing psychological and physical problems and students may show variety of psychosomatic and psychological reactions.

According to the findings of the present study, it can be concluded that exercise and physical activity have a great impact on academic adjustment of first-year students. Hence, if students are encouraged to take part in sport and physical activities, they can overcome their academic problems and difficulties and achieve a higher level of academic adjustment.

Suggestions

Adjustment is one of the key factors of success in various areas of job, society, etc. One of the positions in which adjustment can a key factor for success is education and academic study. According to the findings of the present study, officials and authorities of higher education should be provided with information on the importance of sports and exercise in universities. In addition, they should be provided with helps and assistance in new and more strategic planning, so that social and emotional adjustments can be increased in students and they can be directed towards academic adjustment and thereby academic progress and success.

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