


# Chapter 13

## Cultural Adjustment Challenges Among First-Year Students in Universities

**James Ndege Oluoch**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6699-2490>

*Kenyatta University, Kenya*

### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter presents an overview of the cultural adjustment challenges among first-year students in university. The chapter focuses on the types of cultural adjustments, the stages of cultural adjustments, and the challenges the first-year students experience as they adapt to the new cultural set up in the universities. The purpose of this chapter will be to find the cultural adjustment challenges faced by first-years in the university. In this chapter, document analysis was adopted as the research methodology. The findings of this study had implications to the university management and counseling departments at higher educations. The study recommends that university management should develop appropriate policies to make the learning institutions' environments more conducive for students to adjust effectively in terms of culture. In addition, the author recommends that counseling staff at universities should help the first-year students adapt socially and culturally as they join the universities through peer mentoring.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Students that perform well in their secondary school coursework may be admitted to a variety of universities, both public and private, to pursue bachelor's degrees. For many first-year students at those schools, the period of transition from secondary to institutions of higher learning is not a natural step. The majority of students go through a psychological adjustment process, which is the process of becoming accustomed to a new environment. Additionally, psychological adjustment helps a person build the skills needed to feel good and react appropriately to challenges and expectations from the new environment (Madariaga et al., 2014). Learners attempt to establish a balance between their wants and various

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6961-3.ch013

### ***Cultural Adjustment Challenges Among First-Year Students in Universities***

needs or between their needs and environmental barriers that may create stress and frustration through the behavioral process of adjustment.

In an effort to obtain a degree, thousands of people enroll in colleges each year. The adjustment to college life is affected by previous academic, personal, and university experiences. The adjustment and success of students pursuing higher education degrees is influenced by a number of factors. The college transition process is influenced by prior academic success, and extracurricular activities (Tinto, 1993; Weidman, 1989). For many first-generation college students (Terenzini, et al., 1996), as well as for overseas students, the transition to college is a particularly challenging problem. Further study and investigation are needed to support academic performance for both local and international college students when adjusting to a new life in college. First-generation college students frequently go through various transitions, such as socio-cultural, and academic changes (Terenzini et al., 1994). The university setting offers opportunities for involvement, friendship, social and cultural integration, as well as tools for academic success. Participating in campus life while making the transition from high school to college, according to Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), helped students deal with the cultural shift more skillfully. Hertel (2002) recommended that the social environment be the main focus of programmes to enable first-generation university students adjusting to university life. In addition, social networking are necessary for students to successfully navigate the University experience.

Students undergo a turning point that affects how they move forward in their academic pursuits while also acclimating to their new surroundings during their time in college. A turning point shows how pupils change and how the present educational path is altered to lead to a different perspective (Yair, 2009). Turning points can happen at any point during the academic year and have an impact on the decisions that students make about their future. Many students find it challenging to travel to college on their own for the first time. Many students have a sensation of “not belonging” as they stay in Campus for the first time according to Solomon (2007). The change from home environment to University involves a lot of adjustments in daily life patterns, such as being able to eat differently, being able to develop new associates, developing daily program of activities, and not being able to get usual support from family member.

The transition to University necessitates cultural adaptation (Hunter & Murray, 2007). Students have to adjust to a new lifestyle with new routines, friendships, and everyday encounters. In studies on student achievement, persistence, academic success, and retention rates are examined. The adjustment process is equally important in addition to such subjects. When entering higher education institutions, both domestic and foreign students have trouble adjusting since they must learn a new method of doing things. Cultural adjustment is a psychological adjustments. Cultural adjustment is the term employed to describe the stress and emotions one goes through when adjusting to a social or culturally different setting. People who acclimatize to a new culture frequently experience surprise or some other kind of uncertainty and disorientation. When a student first enrolls at the university, it is seen that the first year of adjustment poses difficulties with regard to cultural changes. (Means & Pyne, 2017). According to Paige (1985), cultural adjustment is divided into four separate stages: the honeymoon, the crisis, and the recovery. Feelings of exhilaration and enthusiasm for being in a new environment define the “honeymoon” stage. The “first engagement and confrontation” stage of the crisis is where the pupils experience confusion and frustration. The students feel worn out as they attempt to fit into the new culture during the “adjustment crisis” or “cultural shock” period. At this point, the university presents a number of cultural adjustment challenges to the students.

University students, in compared to previous educational stages, are continually exposed to psychosocial pressures during their academic careers. These pressures can be emotionally as well as intellectually

17 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:  
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/cultural-adjustment-challenges-among-first-year-students-in-universities/319255](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/cultural-adjustment-challenges-among-first-year-students-in-universities/319255)

## Related Content

---

### Using Experiential Learning to Improve Student Attitude and Learning Quality in Software Engineering Education

Ferdinand Ndifor Che, Kenneth David Strangand Narasimha Rao Vajjhala (2021). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 1-22).

[www.irma-international.org/article/using-experiential-learning-to-improve-student-attitude-and-learning-quality-in-software-engineering-education/273133](http://www.irma-international.org/article/using-experiential-learning-to-improve-student-attitude-and-learning-quality-in-software-engineering-education/273133)

### The Resurrection of the First Accounting Course: The Case for Blended Teaching in Financial Accounting

Gregory J. Krivacek (2023). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 1-17).

[www.irma-international.org/article/the-resurrection-of-the-first-accounting-course/333627](http://www.irma-international.org/article/the-resurrection-of-the-first-accounting-course/333627)

### Faculty and Student Mobility Among ASEAN Higher Education: Prospects, Challenges, and Policy Recommendations

Amirul Mukminin, Kasinyo Harto, Lenny Marzulina, Rina Antasari, Dian Erlina, Ainur Abdrazakova, Fridiyanto Fridiyantoand Erna Listyaningsih (2026). *Policies and Initiatives in the Internationalization of Higher Educational Institutions* (pp. 243-268).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/faculty-and-student-mobility-among-asean-higher-education/413619](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/faculty-and-student-mobility-among-asean-higher-education/413619)

### Pursuit of Research: A Gamified Approach Promoting Research Engagement Among Undergraduate Students

Ayushman Mukherjee, Prachi Goyal, Amandeep Singh, Arun K. Khosla, Kiran Ahujaand Kulbhushan Chand (2019). *Fostering Multiple Levels of Engagement in Higher Education Environments* (pp. 132-155).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/pursuit-of-research/220569](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/pursuit-of-research/220569)

### Challenge-Based Learning in Higher Education: A Malmö University Position Paper

Cecilia E. Christersson, Margareta Melin, Pär Widén, Nils Ekelund, Jonas Christensen, Nina Lundegrenand Patricia Staaf (2022). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 1-14).

[www.irma-international.org/article/challenge-based-learning-in-higher-education/306650](http://www.irma-international.org/article/challenge-based-learning-in-higher-education/306650)