

# Chapter 14

## Coping Mechanism for First– Year Students Transitioning to Higher Education: Academic Challenges and Adjustments to First–Year Students

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Academic adjustments are modifications in how students participate in classes and activities. These modifications allow students to meet standards but do not change them. Academic adjustments give students equal access to the educational opportunities of the University. Tinto and Astin further posit that academic adjustment is the ability to have successful interactions with the new academic environment and to cope with its academic demands. In addition, it revolves around the fit between the student and the university environment. Baker and Siryk's categorize academic adjustment into four aspects, that is, motivation to learn and have clear academic goals, applying oneself to academic work, exerting effort to meet academic demands, and being satisfied with the academic environment. Academic adjustment challenges refer to the factors that negatively affect adjustment to university and coping strategies used by the university students in the adaptation process from the viewpoint of first-year university students.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The transition from high school to university is “an immensely intricate miracle” that necessitates becoming used to a new set of social and educational systems (Jacobs & Pretorius, 2016). Many first-time students experience the biggest changes in their lives as they adjust to university life (Simpson & Frost, 1993). Increased personal freedom can be both liberating and shocking when it first happens (Mudhovozi, 2012). The experience is complicated, and adjusting to this new way of life can be difficult and pose a threat to students’ academic achievement (Yiu et al., 2012). A postsecondary institution enrolment can be viewed as a very favourable development for an individual’s academic and social growth (Secuban, 2012). Students must contend with the difficulties of a new environment and the pressures connected with being removed from their prior settings. However, it is also accompanied by numerous critical life obstacles. These conditions might be a factor in both psychological and physical illness. A relationship with family is therefore crucial during this time. Booth and Mathews (2012) and Al-Khatib et al (2012) both agree that it is crucial for students to be able to set goals and strike a balance between their academic and social obligations in order to be able to adapt to the rigours of university life. The ability to choose appropriate and efficient means to fulfil the demands of a new environment while retaining a positive attitude toward it is a necessary component of adjustment (Thurber & Walton, 2012). The term “school adjustment” refers to children’s interest in and comfort in the classroom, as well as their involvement in and performance in school (Awang et al., 2014). According to Cliniciu (2013), student’s school adjustment is influenced by their abilities, skills, adjustment traits, and interpersonal context. Academic adjustments refer to changes in how students engage in lessons and activities. These adjustments enable students to meet academic requirements without altering the criteria. Academic adjustments empower students with equal opportunities for a university education (Filson & Whittington, 2013). The first time at the University is frequently a new launch for scholars. For numerous, it is the first time down from the home where they will have the freedom to make their own opinions. During this time, scholars gain new guests, knowledge, and understanding of themselves. Numerous first-time scholars look forward to attending council, as it brings new people, fresh ideas, and new chops into their lives (Simpson & Frost, 1993). Still, it is generally known that challenges frequently accompany the transition into the council.

## **BACKGROUND**

University life adjustment is a multifaceted process (Mudhovozi, 2011). Making friends, integrating into college life, and social networking are some of the steps in this process. It consists of the activities that facilitate students’ adjustment to the tertiary setting, support their psychosocial development, and increase their general sense of contentment with their new surroundings, which fosters intrapersonal development (Al-Khatib, Awamleh, and Samawi (2012). According to Malinga-Musamba, (2014), first-year students must devote a lot of time and effort to all of these components and may have issues with their social networks, finances, language, or difficulty adjusting to their new positions (Salami, 2011). Students enrol each year at higher education institutions to continue their education. Additionally, many students from the rest of Africa enrol at academic institutions in South Africa (Somer & Dumont, 2011). Some first-year students acclimatise to this new atmosphere fairly successfully, while others will experience a significant deal of personal stress and emotional instability as a result of this transformation (Mudhovozi, 2011). According to Secuban (2012), among the many issues connected to a poor adjustment

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