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**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS OF INTERIM JOINT MATRICULATION BOARD EXAMINATION (IJMBE) OF AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA -NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

This study investigated the relationship between psychological adjustment and academic achievement among sociology students of the Interim Joint Matriculation Board Examination (IJMBE) programme at Ahmadu Bello University. A correlational research design was adopted, and data were collected from 260 students selected from a population of 1,760. Data were analyzed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between psychological adjustment and academic achievement, with a correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.917, exceeding the critical value of 0.113 at 258 degrees of freedom, and a  $p$ -value of 0.000 less than 0.05. Based on these findings, it was recommended that IJMBE management should provide orientation,

mentorship, and counselling programmes to enhance students' emotional resilience and adjustment to higher institution life. Additionally, developing emotional intelligence and academic skills such as self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social competence will further improve students' adjustment and academic performance.

**Keywords: Psychological adjustment, academic achievement, Higher Institution**

## **Introduction**

The Interim Joint Matriculation Board Examination (IJMBE) is an advanced-level programme established by Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, to prepare students for direct entry admission into Nigerian universities. The programme serves as an alternative to the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), allowing successful candidates to gain admission into 200 level. Although IJMBE students are not yet undergraduates, they are trained within higher educational environments, live independently, and face similar academic, social, and emotional adjustment challenges as first-year university students. Consequently, studying the psychological adjustment of IJMBE students provides insights into how pre-university learners adapt to the demands of higher education.

In the era of globalization, people are moving from one place to another without or with minimum restriction for diverse purposes including for further studies in higher educational institutions. Higher educational institution means a university or college where students pursue education after secondary school. These higher educational institutions attract a considerable population of youths and provide students with experiences and opportunities for social and psychological evolution. Social and psychological evolution refers to students' development in emotional regulation and social interaction as they adapt to new environments like higher institutions (Aboagye *et al.*, 2021). However, this can be a stressful experience that may lead to problems of adjustment for the students. Without a successful adjustment to life in higher institution students may quit studying or display maladjusted responses. (Salami, 2016). Life at the tertiary level has its challenges as a result of sudden changes that fresh students are exposed to which can impact on them negatively. Some challenges are decreased parental control, more freedom, main changes in daily programmes, increased expectations in the educational and social

fields, prevalence of adjustment problem and anxiety. These series of changes are considered serious and can result in acute stress for some people so that 60% of the students leave school without finishing their courses in the first two years of schooling. (Williams & Thomas, 2016). Alkhatib (2015) explained that higher education life has its own demands and challenges. Failure in meeting those demands and challenges will cause academic, psychological and social problems for the students who are the mostly affected by these problems. These challenges can lead to issues such as poor academic performance, depression, social withdrawal, substance abuse, or dropping out of school. It is therefore important to guide students to achieve adjustment in order to avoid those problems and achieve goals.

Adjustment is harmonious relationship with the environment involving the ability to satisfy most of one's needs and most of the demands, both physical and social that is put upon one. Adjustment, in psychology according to Mahmood and Igbal (2015) refers to the behavioural process by which humans and other animals maintain equilibrium among their various needs and the obstacles of their environment. While, Sufian (2017) stated that adjustment is the individual meeting of psychological demands and accepting himself. Al-ananni (2016) sees adjustment as a behaviour directed to overcome the obstacles or the techniques used by people to fulfil needs and satisfy motives as well as reducing pressures to achieve balance and satisfaction. Students' adjustment is about adjustment in specific areas, such as academic, social, personal emotional.

Higher institutions are centres that attract a considerable number of youth after secondary school, offering experiences that foster social and psychological development. However, this transition can be stressful, as students move from parental guidance to independent living, facing increased freedom and new responsibilities. The adjustment process involves coping with academic demands, forming social relationships, and managing emotional well-being. Social adjustment

refers to a student's ability to engage in meaningful relationships and activities, while personal/emotional adjustment reflects their psychological response to the new environment. Successful adjustment is linked to mental health and academic success, whereas poor adjustment can result in anxiety, depression, and academic withdrawal. Adjustment is also adaptation to prevalent norms and requirements of the school (Smith, 2020). From this perspective, the student needs to adjust to the laws and official rules of his environment and its unwritten rules.

Students' adjustment is a process that should be considered by expert and consultants. The term of adjustment refers to a person's attempts to get along with and survive in social and physical environment. In the notion of adjustment, there are two fundamental and personal factors. Students' adjustment is about adjustment in the following areas which are experience about academic, social and personal emotional compatibility with learning environment including the concepts of goal setting, goal commitment and attachment to the institution since arrival there. Adjustment to higher institution has to do with adaptation to prevalent norms and requirements of the university. Thus, adjustment is a continuous process by which a person varies his/her behaviour to produce a more harmonious relationship between himself/herself and his/her environment (Salami, 2016). It implies changes in thinking and way of life to the demands of the new situation and environment. A number of researches have been carried out to study the adjustability of students because the access of researches easy to them but a rare work has been done to investigate the psychological adjustment to students such studies as Ikechukwu (2014) who studied emotional intelligence and learning styles as predictors of students' academic achievement. Similarly, Ogoemeka (2013) conducted a study on emotional intelligence and life adjustment for Nigerian secondary school students and found significant differences between students' adjustment levels. In another study, Yusuf and Adigun (2010) explored the influence of emotional intelligence on academic achievement among undergraduate students, revealing a

positive relationship. Also, Uba and Musa (2019) examined the role of psychological adjustment in predicting academic success and reported that students with better psychological adjustment performed significantly better academically. Results showed that emotional intelligence significantly predicted academic achievement of students. Ogoemeka (2013) conducted a study of emotional intelligence and life adjustment for Nigerian secondary school students in Ondo and Oyo States in south-west, using a sample of 1070 students drawn through cluster random sampling technique. Results indicated that significant differences were found between students in Ondo and Oyo States concerning emotional intelligence (EI) and life adjustment (LA). Hence it may be said that there is a gap of knowledge in this regard. So, this study is an attempt to fill this gap by conducting this study to explore psychological adjustment and academic achievements among IJMB students.

## **Literature Review**

### **Psychological Adjustment**

Psychological adjustment refers to an individual's ability to adapt to new environments and challenges, maintaining emotional balance and well-being. It involves managing stress, emotions, and social relationships, particularly during transitions such as starting college (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Elias *et al.*, 2007). Self-esteem is defined as the emotional evaluation individuals make about themselves, which is generally in the form of approval or disapproval. It indicates the extent to which persons believe themselves to be capable, significant, successful and worthy. According to Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach and Rosenberg (1995), global self-esteem is an overall feeling of self-worth. Higher global self-esteem has been shown to be vital for transition to college (Hickman, *et al.*, 2000), but lower self-esteem has been related to poorer social adjustment (Rice, 1999). Similarly, higher global self-esteem is related to overall, as well

as academic and social adjustment among first year students (Elias, Mahyuddin, & Noordin, 2007; Friedlander *et al.*, 2007; Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007). It is expected in this study that self-esteem will predict adjustment to college in first year students.

Stress is the demand made on people to which they respond and affects their physical, psychological and behavioural characteristics. Stress has been reported to affect psychological and physical health of students (Dwyer & Cummings, 2001). Researchers have shown that students' stress level at the beginning of the semester predicted their academic, social, personal-emotional and overall adjustment later (Friedlandeer *et al.*, 2007; Jamara, Belgrave, & Zea, 1996; Pancer, Hunsberger, Pratt, & Allisat, 2000; Pritchard, *et al.*, 2007; Solberg, *et al.*, 1994; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000).

Emotional intelligence is defined as: (1) the ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion; (2) the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought, the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and (3) the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Emotional intelligence has been related to several human values, such as personal relations, effective leadership skills, life satisfaction, creativity, sales and success in occupations (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995; Palmer *et al.*, 2001). Researches have shown that people who have high emotional intelligence demonstrate better psychological well-being (Bar-On, 2005; Palmer, Walls, Burgess, & Stough, 2001) and adjustment to college or university (Elias, *et al.*, 2007; Parker, Hogan, Eastbrook, Oke, & Wood, 2006; Westphal, 2007). It is proposed that emotional intelligence will predict adjustment in college of first year students.

### **Academic Achievement**

Academic achievement among Interim Joint Matriculation Board Examination (IJMBE) students refers to their performance in the programme, which is measured using the Cumulative Point Average (CPA) system. The CPA is calculated based on students' grades across all registered subjects, and it serves as the main criterion for determining their eligibility for direct entry admission into Nigerian universities at the 200 level. A higher CPA indicates better mastery of course content and readiness for university-level academic demands.

In the IJMBE context, academic achievement is influenced by multiple psychological and environmental factors such as emotional intelligence, social adjustment, learning motivation, and stress management. Since IJMBE students often experience the same academic pressure and independence as university undergraduates, their psychological adjustment plays a key role in how well they perform. Studies, such as those by Yusuf and Adigun (2010) and Uba and Musa (2019), have shown that students with higher emotional stability and better psychological adjustment tend to achieve superior academic results. Thus, within the IJMBE framework, academic achievement is not only a reflection of intellectual capability but also of how well students adapt psychologically and socially to the learning environment that simulates higher education.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Students enrolled in the Interim Joint Matriculation Board Examination (IJMBE) programme experience the challenge of adjusting psychologically to a new academic environment that demands independent learning, emotional stability, and social adaptation similar to university life. Many IJMBE students struggle to manage these demands, resulting in anxiety, low motivation, and difficulty maintaining focus on their studies. Such poor psychological adjustment — in the social, personal/emotional, and academic domains — often translates into

low Cumulative Point Average (CPA), which determines their eligibility for direct entry into higher institutions. Despite the critical role psychological adjustment plays in academic performance, most existing studies in Nigeria have concentrated on undergraduates, neglecting the peculiar transitional experience of IJMBE students. This study therefore investigates the relationship between psychological adjustment and academic achievement among IJMBE students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, to determine how emotional, social, and academic adjustment collectively influence their CPA outcomes.

### **Objectives of the Study**

To determine the relationship between psychological adjustment and academic achievement of students in higher institution.

### **Research Question**

What is the relationship between psychological adjustment and academic achievement of students in higher institution?

### **Research Hypothesis**

There is no significant relationship between psychological adjustment and academic achievement of student in higher institution.

### **Method**

The research design used for this study was a correlational design. This design was considered appropriate for investigating the relationship between psychological adjustment and academic performance among students. The population of the study consisted of all 1,760 Sociology students of the Interim Joint Matriculation Board (IJMB) during the 2016/2017 academic year. A

sample of 260 students was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling method to ensure adequate representation. The selection of the sample involved the use of a table by Krejcie and Morgan to determine the appropriate sample size from a known population. The students were selected from the Sociology department to participate in the study on the basis of representativeness and accessibility.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was based on the Bar-On model of emotional-social intelligence, which defines emotional intelligence as a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills, and facilitators that determine how effectively individuals understand and express themselves, relate with others, and cope with daily demands (Saber, 2016). The questionnaire also addressed institutional factors such as group cohesiveness, composition, structure, and values, as well as physical facilities, student support services, and rules and regulations that facilitate learning. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation to determine the relationship between psychological adjustment and academic performance at the 0.05 level of significance.

**Data Analysis:** Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Statistics to determine the relationship between psychological adjustment and academic achievement. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher to assess the psychological adjustment level of Sociology students of IJMB. The questionnaire consisted of ten (10) items rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 4 (Strongly Disagree). The instrument was subjected to face and content validity to ensure its suitability for the study.

Students' academic achievement was measured using their Cumulative Point Average (CPA) obtained from the official academic records of the IJMB Examination Office of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The CPA served as an objective measure of each student's academic performance, representing the average of their scores across all registered courses.

## Results

**Table 1;** Analysis of Relationship between Psychological Adjustment and Academic Achievement of Fresh Students

Variable	$\eta$	Mean	Std.dev	Corr	R-val	DIF	P
Academic Performance	260	54.840	5.0513				
				0.917	0.113	258	0.0001
Psychological Adjustment	260	29.54	5.05				

Correlation is Significant at  $P \leq 0.05$  level

## Discussions

Result emanating from Table 1 shows that a significant relationship exists between psychological Adjustment and Academic Achievement among sociology student of I.J.M.B. This is because the computed correlation index  $r$  score of 0.917 is above the  $r$  value of 0.113 at  $df$  258. The calculated  $p$ -value of 0.001 was found to be lower than the 0.05 alpha level. The relationship between the psychological adjustment and academic achievement is directly proportional. That is the higher the level of psychological adjustment the higher the students' academic achievement.

This study is in agreement with studies that state that there is a direct impact of student who is emotionally, socially, adjusted and his/her academic excellence. Al-nabhan, 2001; Ali, 2003;

Salderu, 1992, (in) Alkhatib, Awamleh and Samawi, (2012) asserts that adjustment with higher education life can be a strong indicator of the academic level of the students from one hand and the level of social relations development and achieving personal goals from the other hand. They note that many educational scholars studied this aspect in order to explore the status of the academic, social and psychological level of undergraduate students then determining the problems facing them when trying to achieve their goals. Abu Baker, 1997 in Alkhatib *et al* (2012) states that higher institute life has its own demands and challenges will cause academic drawbacks Psychological and social problems mostly affect students, making it critical for higher education institutions to foster well-adjusted individuals. Therefore, it is critical that well-adjusted students emotionally, socially, psychologically are needed in higher education institution to be able to cope with serious academic tasks. To further stress the fact that is very important that young student is properly adjusted before he/she can do well in school. Saber (2016) states that “adjustment is considered one of the basic concepts in mental health, since most of the behaviours of the individual whether successful or unsuccessful are just attempts to adjustment in order to reduce the tension suffered by the individual. Sound psychological adjustment paves for the principle of self-control, social moderation, flexibility and adaptability to the individuals in the community

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the results of this study indicated that there is a high relationship between psychological adjustment and academic achievement of sociology students who were admitted through (IJMBE).

## **Recommendations**

- I. Orientation and Counselling Support: IJMBE management should organize regular orientation and counselling sessions focused on helping students develop emotional resilience, stress management, and social adaptation skills necessary for academic success.
- II. Monitoring and Mentorship: Academic advisers and tutors should establish a mentorship system to monitor students' progress and provide early intervention for those struggling with social or emotional adjustment.
- III. Skill Development Workshops: The institution should conduct workshops on study habits, time management, and goal setting to enhance students' academic adjustment and improve their CPA performance.
- IV. Peer Support Groups: Establish peer support or discussion groups that allow students to share experiences and coping strategies to promote social connectedness and reduce isolation.
- V. Institutional Collaboration: Counselling units, lecturers, and administrators should collaborate in identifying and addressing students' psychological challenges to foster a more supportive learning environment

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