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## Academic Adaptation and Achievement: A Comparative Study of Outstanding Students and Students under Academic Probation at the University of Sharjah

Prof. Bushra A. Al Akashee  
*Univerysity of Sharjah, Bushraalakashee@yahoo.com*

Prof. Abdalla Falah El-mneizel  
*University of Sharjah, amneizel@sharjah.ac.ae*

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التكيف الأكاديمي وعلاقته بالأداء التحصيلي لدى طلبة جامعة الشارقة: دراسة  
مقارنه بين الطلبة الواقعين تحت الملاحظة الاكاديمية والطلبة المتفوقين

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**Prof. Bushra A. Alakashee**

*University of Sharjah, College of Arts,  
Humanities & Social Sciences, Education, UAE*  
[balakashee@sharjah.ac.ae](mailto:balakashee@sharjah.ac.ae)

أ.د. بشرى أحمد العكايشي

قسم التربية - جامعة الشارقة - دولة الامارات  
العربية المتحدة  
[balakashee@sharjah.ac.ae](mailto:balakashee@sharjah.ac.ae)

**Prof. Abdalla Falah El-mneizel**

*University of Sharjah, College of Arts,  
Humanities & Social Sciences, Education, UAE*

أ. د. عبد الله فلاح المنيزل

قسم التربية - جامعة الشارقة - دولة الامارات  
العربية المتحدة

## Academic Adaptation and Achievement: A Comparative Study of Outstanding Students and Students under Academic Probation at the University of Sharjah

### Abstract

This study aimed to identify the level of academic adaptation of University of Sharjah students and the variation in the level of academic adaptation in relation to the level of academic performance, specifically comparing outstanding students and those under probation. The sample of study comprised 49 male and female students under probation and 152 outstanding students who spent at least one academic year, or 30 credit hours, at the University. They responded to the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), which they received through the University IT Centre. The results indicated that the students are well adapted personally and emotionally and had a high degree of attachment. However, students reported that they were facing difficulties of coping with academic demands and adapting to university life. The results indicated a statistically significant difference ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) between the two study groups on the personal-emotional adjustment and academic adjustment subscales, in favour of outstanding students. In addition, outstanding students scored higher on the full scale and on some items in the four subscales. However, no differences were observed between the two groups on the social adjustment and attachment subscales.

*Keywords:* Academic adaptation, academic achievement, university students, students under academic probation, outstanding students

## التكيف الأكاديمي وعلاقته بالأداء التحصيلي لدى طلبة جامعة الشارقة: دراسة مقارنة بين الطلبة الواقعين تحت الملاحظة الأكاديمية والطلبة المتفوقين

### مستخلص البحث

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد مستوى التكيف الأكاديمي لطلاب جامعة الشارقة واختلاف ذلك باختلاف المستوى الدراسي للطلاب (الطلبة المتفوقين مقابل الطلبة الواقعين تحت الملاحظة الأكاديمية). وقد تألفت عينة الدراسة من (49) طالبا وطالبة من الواقعين تحت الملاحظة الأكاديمية، و (152) طالبا وطالبة من المتفوقين والذين اجابوا على مقياس التكيف الأكاديمي. وأشارت النتائج الى وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية عند مستوى  $\alpha = 0.05$  على بعدي التكيف الشخصي - الانفعالي، والتكيف الأكاديمي بين الطلبة المتفوقين والطلبة الواقعين تحت الملاحظة الأكاديمية لصالح الطلبة المتفوقين، ولم تظهر النتائج وجود فروق بين الطلبة المتفوقين والطلبة الواقعين تحت الملاحظة الأكاديمية على بعد التعلق والتكيف الاجتماعي. وبالنسبة للبعد الكلي (المقياس الكلي)، اي الدرجة الكلية على الأبعاد مجتمعة فقد اشارت النتائج الى وجود فروق بين الطلبة المتفوقين والطلبة الواقعين تحت الملاحظة الأكاديمية وهذه الفروق لصالح الطلبة المتفوقين. كذلك أشارت النتائج أيضا إلى وجود فروق ظاهرية في متوسطات الأداء على بعض الفقرات المكونة لأبعاد المقياس الأربعة (الشخصي - الانفعالي، التعلق، التكيف الأكاديمي، التكيف الاجتماعي) وقد كانت هذه الفروق في معظمها لصالح الطلبة المتفوقين.

*الكلمات المفتاحية:* التكيف الأكاديمي، التحصيل الدراسي، طلبة الجامعة، لطلبة الواقعين

تحت الملاحظة الأكاديمية، الطلاب المتفوقون

## Introduction

The adaptation of students to university environment is a major indicator of the quality of university life, because it is linked to their interaction with others and cooperation in the performance of their study tasks. It also affects their academic achievement. Students who experience seemingly insurmountable study difficulties are dissatisfied and, therefore, suffer from poor adaptation. This may affect their academic achievement. Several studies suggest that academic adaptation and student commitment to achieving their goals are good indicators of the probability of dropping out, and the existence of a negative correlation between the different items of adjusting to university life and the probability of dropping out (Abduljaber, 2012).

Adaptation also implies an active interaction between the individual and his/her environment. In an academic context, the application of this concept requires the individual to utilize his/her various personal resources in order to perform academically. The academic environment is interactive and dynamic, where various factors are at play. These factors may affect academic adaptation either directly or indirectly. This is because of the many circumstances that may create psychological pressure on the students and that need to be addressed. Research shows that during their university studies, students need to prepare for exams, achieve satisfactory grades, compete, and manage a substantial amount of information in a short time. Several personal, environmental and social factors then interact and dictate the output of the academic environment (Christopher, 2011). In addition, there is a discrepancy between students' expectations and their impressions of university life, which could affect their adaptation, especially with the responsibilities they have to shoulder as part of their university studies (Mahyuddin, 2010).

Since students are viewed as an essential input of higher education, and as a number of students are under academic probation, we conducted

this study in an attempt to explore the interaction between academic adaptation and academic achievement among University of Sharjah students. The study focuses, in particular, on comparing high-achieving students and those under academic probation and their levels of academic adaptation. The findings of this study will then result in the production of a blueprint that will enable students to better adapt to their academic environment. This is a new experience that is significantly unlike their pre-tertiary life, and one where they are expected to mature into self-sufficient adults and acquire a new identity. Perry (cited in Albadareen & Ghaith, 2013) basing his views on Erikson's theory of emotional development posits that university is the ideal place for students to discover many alternatives and attempt to establish a balanced personal identity.

Students who are unable to cope with the demands of university life cannot adapt to this new environment and consequently may feel dissatisfied or discontented. They now have to face various obstacles and difficulties, mostly academic, and need to work independently to overcome these concerns. For example, in contrast to the pre-tertiary level, their tutors at university are not the only source of information. As a result, many may drop out or perform poorly in their studies. Some studies point to a positive link between a student's academic achievement and his/her ability to adapt. However, others such as the one conducted by Alrafou'a and Alqarara'a (2004) that focused on students of Child Education in Jordan suggest that there is no statistically significant correlation between these two variables. A number of other studies indicate that the discrepancy between student expectations and actual impressions of university life negatively affects their adaptation, which is often linked to academic achievement (see, for example, Mahyuddin, 2010).

Institutes of higher education and the University of Sharjah in particular, consider their students as an essential element in the development and progress of their society. Therefore, a major concern of

these institutes is to identify the obstacles that might hinder their students' progress, especially their ability to adapt to university life, which affects their academic performance and even retention.

### **Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

Some of the studies that focused on the issue under discussion here indicated that the strongest influencing factor and indicator of academic adaptation was high academic achievement. This prompted many institutes of higher education, especially in the USA, to organize orientation programmes and workshops for their new students that would introduce them to university life and the required study skills such as time management, in order to help them better adapt to their new academic environment (Atallah, 2010).

The process of adaptation itself received much attention in the literature. Charles Darwin was the first to use the term when explaining his theory of evolution. The theory indicates that only those living organisms that can cope with and adapt to the demands and perils of their environment survive, hence the idea of 'survival of the fittest.' An individual would indomitably seek to satisfy his/her needs and surmount any obstacles he/she may face in order to achieve a state of successful adaptation and balance (Alhabit, 1980). Meanwhile, Erikson's theory of psychological development indicates that university is an ideal place for individuals to explore their life options and establish a balanced personal identity.

In general, structuralism views adaptation as the ultimate goal of evolutionary development and that maintaining equilibrium between the individual and his environment is key to countering imbalance and disturbance. Structuralism has had a significant influence on education, particularly through the work of Jean Piaget on child cognitive development, as it expresses many of the modern concepts and principles that focus on improving pedagogical practices. Piaget described adaptation as involving

two sub-processes: assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation occurs when the individual responds to his/her environment by applying concepts that already exist in his/her cognitive repertoire. This means that they respond only to experiences similar to what they already know. This will not lead to cognitive or mental development. For this to happen, changes need to take place. Accommodation is the process of altering existing concepts to deal with new experiences.

Meanwhile, behaviourists view any activity as a means to achieving a specific goal, which is independent of the behaviour of the individual. This means that our behaviour is an inevitable response to stimuli that we do not control (Altahan, 1992). In addition, the concept of habit formation is central to behaviourist thought. A habit is the association of a stimulus with a certain response. As these habits are learned and acquired behaviours, it is possible then to replace maladaptive habits with adaptive ones (Desoki, 1997).

Adherents to the school of psychoanalysis believe that individuals are born with certain instincts, and urges or motives. Life is a series of conflicts between a person's urges, which might not be socially acceptable, and social demands. These conflicts result in either the satisfaction or frustration of these urges. It then follows that adaptation is realized when the Ego, which operates within the confines of reality, achieves a balance between the needs of the Id and the moral warnings of the Superego.

The concept of individuality is central to the humanistic approach, especially in relation to such notions as establishing a personality and psychological adaptation. Positive self-esteem is the mark of a healthy, well-adapted individual and is positively correlated with positive regard from and of other people, and is essential to achieving adaptation. It is the 'congruence' between an individual's perceptions of the real self and the ideal self those results in better adaptation and mental health, while incongruence causes stress and poor self-acceptance (see Spencer & Jeffery, 1980).



This study adopts a cognitive approach. That is because, in our view, a new university student needs to modify his/her pre-existing concepts according to the requirements of this new experience: a process similar to Piaget's accommodation subprocess. This is essential for the student to 'assimilate' new concepts and achieve academic adaptation.

A student's academic adaptation may be hampered by a host of issues that could also thwart a university's efforts to build his/her character. These issues could be the result of various factors such as the divergence between university and school lives that is mainly characterized by poor preparation for the transition from one educational stage to the other, and the differences in teaching methods and assessment. Consequently, students may suffer from such psychological, social and academic difficulties as stress, low self-confidence, inability to establish positive relations with their peers and/or instructors, substandard academic performance, and poor time management.

In a study that attempted to determine the level of social and academic adjustment of Haitian immigrants to the USA, Ulysse (2001) studied the effect of pre-contact experiences, learning aptitude, family and peer relations, educational background, school environment and academic adaptation. The sample of study consisted of six subjects who attended personal interviews that were recorded and analysed. The results of the study indicated that students' perceptions as well as the support they received from family, friends and teachers facilitated their social and academic adjustment. Moor (2003) studied the relationship between family environment and academic performance, and adjustment to college of 86 first-generation students. For the purpose of data collection, Moor employed the family environment scale and adjustment to college questionnaire. The results of the study showed that there was a positive correlation between family support and a student's academic performance and adaptation. There was also a statistically significant difference between

average scores of adaptation and academic performance. In 2004, Tseng conducted a study to measure the level of academic adaptation among immigrant students who held American nationality. The sample consisted of 998 eighteen to twenty-five-year-old students who hailed from Asian, Latin, African and European origins. After consulting the subjects' academic records, it was observed that Asian-American students were more academically adapted than other participants, while students whose parents were born in the United States of America were the least adapted. The study also indicated that family conditions had a substantial impact on academic adaptation.

Another study that aimed to explore the relationship between students' academic adaptation and academic achievement, and years of study was conducted on a total of 180 female subjects; 70 students were in their first year of study, 40 in their second year, and 70 in the third year (Alrafou'a & Alqara'a, 2004). The researchers employed the adjustment to college scale that they had especially modified, and it revealed that there is a correlation between adjustment to college life and academic achievement. It also showed that there was a statistically significant difference in adjustment to university life attributed to level of study, in favour of first and second year students. In addition, according to Shamsan (2005), adaptation to university life is an essential prerequisite for student success and retention as it leads to higher motivation for academic achievement. It is also a strong indicator of students' psychological wellbeing and their satisfaction with their university lives. These factors determine their willingness to accept the values and attitudes that their university attempts to instil in them.

Aljebori and Alhamdani (2006) surveyed 410 students at Almarj University using their attitude towards major discipline of study and adjustment to college scales. Their research aimed to study the relationship between adjustment to university community and such variables as attitude

to major discipline of study, gender, year of study, accommodation environment and academic department. The results revealed that there was a significant and positive correlation between adjustment to university community and students' attitude to major discipline and year of study. In another study, Habaib and Abu-maraq (2009) explored the connection between adaptation to university and gender, major discipline of study, university location and change of majors among 845 An Najah University students. The adjustment to university scale developed by Alail (1993) was adopted for the purposes of the study. Participants scored positively on all four major subscales with the social subscale being the highest, followed by the emotional, disciplinary and then the academic subscale. While there was no statistically significant difference between the independent variables in three subscales (social, academic and disciplinary) and students' college of study, there was a difference in the emotional subscale in favour of students of humanities. In addition, gender had no impact on participants' scores on the social and emotional subscales. However, there were differences between men and women, in favour of men, in the disciplinary subscale and in favour of women in the academic subscale. The study also showed that whereas changing the major course of study yielded no difference among the participants on the disciplinary subscale, there were differences in the other three subscales in favour of students who did not change their majors.

Bani-Khaled (2010) studied a random sample of 200 students, 79 males and 121 females, of the College of Pedagogical Sciences at Al Al-bayt University. His research aimed at exploring the relationship between academic adaptation and self-efficacy using the Henry Borough academic adjustment scale, and Jerusalem and Schwarzer's general self-efficacy scale (GSE) as translated by Radwan (1997). The results of the study indicated that there were no statistically significant differences among the subjects in academic adaptation as attributed to gender and level of study, or in the interaction between the two variables. However, there was a significant

correlation between academic adjustment and general self-efficacy. In another study (Elias, Noordin, & Mahyuddin, 2010), the researchers focused on achievement, motivation and self-efficacy in relation to academic adaptation among a sample of 178 university students in Malaysia. The results of the study showed that there was a positive correlation between achievement, motivation and adaptation. Students who successfully completed their studies were more adapted to university life and faced far less problems compared with those who fell behind.

An important factor that was also explored in some studies was the disparity between student expectations and impressions of university life. This can negatively affect their ability to adapt, especially with the extra responsibilities they need to shoulder as university students (Mahyuddin, 2010). In addition, the relationship between students' mental health and academic adaptation was the focus of some studies such as the one conducted by Alshamri (2013). The researcher adopted the descriptive approach, and employed the mental health and adjustment to college scales. The findings of this study indicated that there was a significant correlation between the two variables.

A study conducted by Calaguas (2011) on academic achievement and the difficulties of academic adjustment among a sample of 329 undergraduate students in the Philippines aimed to find a correlation coefficient between students' average cumulative grades at the end of their first year and their scores on the academic adaptation difficulties scale. The results indicated a statistically significant negative correlation between the weighted mean and the scores on the dimension of academic adjustment difficulties. The correlation coefficient was 0.38, which is statistically significant. Al-Khatib Awamleh, and Samawi (2012) conducted a study on student adjustment to university life. Their subjects consisted of a random sample of 343 students at Al-Balqa' Applied University. The results showed that the adjustment of students to university life was at the intermediate

level. Furthermore, there were statistically significant differences in the dimensions of adaptation to social life that were attributed to the variables of college, gender, level of study and their interaction.

Albadareen & Ghaith (2013) studied a number of variables, including parenting styles, identity styles and academic adaptation and whether these variables served as good predictors of academic self-efficacy. The study surveyed a random sample of 140 students at the Hashemite University. The findings of the study indicated that academic adaptation was a statistically significant indicator of a student's academic self-efficacy.

A more recent study focused on the relationship between students' level of adjustment to college, and their gender and academic achievement among a random sample of 300 first year students at the University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain (Paramo, Tianjero, & Rodriguez, 2015). The researchers adopted Baker and Siryk's adjustment to college scale. Findings indicated that students who displayed poor levels of academic and institutional adaptation reached lower levels of academic achievement compared to their peers. Based on data analysis, the researchers concluded that gender did not affect student achievement in the first academic year and that differences in academic achievement among the participants could be explained by variances in levels of academic adaptation. A year later, Ali & Abdulrahman (2016) conducted a study to identify the relationship between academic adjustment and self-centeredness, and how this relationship changed with the effects of the independent variables (gender and academic specialization). The study also focused on understanding the extent to which academic adjustment affected self-centeredness. Subjects of the study were a randomized stratified sample of 400 students with a proportional distribution.

The researchers developed two research tools; namely the academic adjustment scale, which consisted of 56 items; and the self-centeredness scale that included 42 items, and whose psychometric characteristics were

verified by the researchers. The results showed that university students enjoy a high level of academic adjustment and self-centeredness. Furthermore, there were no differences in self-centeredness in relation to the two independent variables or as a result of their interaction. As for academic adaptation, it was noticed that gender or the interaction between gender and academic specialization had no significant effect on this variable. However, differences were noticed because of changes in academic specialization, in favour of the humanities. It was also concluded that there was no correlation between academic adaptation and self-centeredness.

It might be worth noting here that Arab scholars to explore academic adaptation and its relation to numerous variables, including academic achievement, conducted several studies. However, we chose not to include these studies here as many are outdated and may not serve the purposes of this study when they reflect a different reality, especially in a fast-paced world like ours.

Based on this review of the literature, it is believed that the findings of this study will add to our knowledge of the topic of investigation. The vast majority of the studies mentioned above indicate that there is a positive correlation between academic adaptation and academic achievement. However, many of these studies, rather than focusing exclusively on the two variables under investigation, explored them along with several other variables. To add, several of these studies limited their target sample to first year students. Another distinguishing factor of this investigation is that no other study was conducted on university student population in the UAE in general and the University of Sharjah in particular.

### **Problem of the Study**

This study explores a central issue that has far-reaching effects, not only on individual students but also on institutes of higher education and society as a whole. Universities consider students and their success as their

ultimate priority. Graduates fill professional roles that serve the society and contribute to its progress.

The extent to which a student is satisfied with and adapted to his university life could limit the level of his productivity and willingness to fully adopt the values and attitudes promoted by his university. Furthermore, students may suffer tremendous psychological stress because of having to confront the various demands of university life and consequently may quit their studies (Tinto, 1996). The challenges these students face vary drastically from the need to form new relationships, maintain these relations, and learn new strategies to managing highly demanding academic tasks. In other words, they need to become fully independent individuals. Their success or failure in overcoming these challenges would determine whether they quit university or adapt to this new environment and gain confidence in their abilities, which would have a positive impact on their academic achievement.

From their extensive experience in academic counselling and in the field, the researchers observed that a large number of students who are under academic probation suffer from maladaptation to university life. This factor has a significant effect on these students' academic achievement. These observations were the catalyst for this paper.

The aim of this study is to identify academic adaptation and its relation to academic achievement through the comparison of outstanding students and those under academic probation. It seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of academic adaptation of University of Sharjah students?
2. Are there significant differences in academic adaptation, and can this be attributed to the level of academic achievement of students?

### Significance of the Study

As discussed briefly above, this study is expected to shed light on a very important aspect of students' experiences at the tertiary level: a facet that is of great interest to the academic community and society.

Issues such as academic adaptation, academic achievement, and students' social and personal characteristics have been the subject of extensive research, but it has not yielded conclusive findings on the nature of the relationship between these factors. Furthermore, no similar study has been conducted on students at the University of Sharjah. This is a very significant aspect of this study, especially as the student and faculty population at the University is so culturally diverse that interaction among its members may be adversely affected in several ways. Social interaction is crucial to academic adaptation and is thought to affect students' academic achievement. Hence, this study may be considered unique in this field and could lead to further studies on the same issue.

This study is also of significant interest to students and their society. Of particular value is how this study may empower students to self-manage and better deal with the various challenges they encounter as they strive to adapt to university life. These students will then be able to contribute effectively to their society. Findings of this research can also inform decision makers while devising the University's student support plans. These plans are intended to help students manage any challenges they may face whether in or outside the University. This is achieved through its partnership with various official institutes such as the Ministry of Education, where students can receive more effective academic and career counselling to prepare them for university life and reduce stress while they transition to a new academic environment. In addition, family plays a crucial role in helping these students gain independence and, hence, self-efficacy.

The findings of this study may inform further recommendations and the designing of special programmes that aim at enabling students to better



adapt to university life, and deal with many of the psychological, social or academic issues they encounter at university.

### Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Identify the different dimensions of academic adaptation among University of Sharjah students.
2. Investigate the relationship between academic adaptation and students' academic achievement.

### Limitations of the Study

The interpretation of the results of the study is determined by:

1. Outstanding students and those under academic probation at the University of Sharjah in the academic year 2017-2018.
2. Availability of acceptable evidence of the validity and reliability of the scale used in this study.

### Operational Definition of Study Variables

**Academic Adaptation.** It refers to the different actions and notions consciously employed by students to manage and control the effects of the various academic experiences that they might undergo at university. In addition, it refers to students' ability to deal with and positively resolve any issues in a way that enables them to be well adjusted personally and better adapted to their academic environment. The operational definition of academic adaptation is the score a student receives on the modified version of the Baker and Siryk scale.

**Academic Performance.** It is the qualitative and quantitative achievement of the student on a particular study task during a specific semester, which is defined operationally as the GPA of second year and above students.

**Students under academic probation.** They are students who received a GPA below 2.0 at the time of this study.

**Outstanding Students.** They are those who achieved a GPA of 3.0 and above at the time of the study.

## Method

### Participants

The population of this study comprised both outstanding students (a total of 2347) and those under academic probation (1082) who were registered at the University of Sharjah during the academic year 2017-18. Only second to final year students who have completed at least 30 credit hours of study were included in the population of the study. The total number of students registered at the University that year was 14,000. The Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire was sent electronically to the target population of the study through the University's IT Centre. Students were asked to respond to the questionnaire electronically and were reminded to do so. A total of 201 students responded to the questionnaire, 49 of whom were under academic probation and 152 were outstanding.

### Instruments

**Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire.** This instrument was originally developed by Baker and Siryk in 1989 and later modified by the researchers for use in the Arab context. The researchers deemed it appropriate to revert to the original scale because of the time lapse since it was first developed. The original instrument consisted of 74 items divided into the following 4 subscales:

1. Personal and emotional adaptation: this subscale consists of 15 items that measure students' emotional state during their adjustment to university and to what extent they suffer psychological or physical discomfort.
2. Attachment: this subscale consists of 15 items that measure students' commitment to their university and its goals, and the level of their

attachment to the university, especially identifying the type of relationship they have with the university.

3. Academic adaptation: the 24 items included in this subscale measure the extent to which students succeed in dealing with the academic demands that characterize their university experiences.
4. Social adaptation: this subscale is comprised of 20 items aimed at measuring how effectively students manage the socio-personal demands of their university experience.

In order to identify evidence of validity and reliability of the scale, the following procedures have been implemented:

1. All items included were translated from English into Arabic.
2. Six faculty members of the Education and Sociology departments in the University of Sharjah reviewed a first draft of the scale. Based on their feedback, some of the items were modified, and one rejected, as they were deemed inappropriate for the Arab culture.
3. The whole scale was reverse translated from Arabic into English by an expert translator in order to confirm that the Arabic translation faithfully reflected the original English script.
4. Cronbach Alpha was used to assess the scale's reliability coefficient. The internal consistency of the subscales ranged from 0.833 to 0.932, and reached 0.965 for the overall scale after removing items with negative or below 0.30 correlation with their subscale as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Internal Consistency Coefficients for the Overall Scale and Its Four Subscales*

Scale/Subscale	Internal Validity Coefficient	Number of Items
Personal and emotional adaptation	0.83	8
Attachment	0.86	9
Academic adaptation	0.91	24
Social adaptation	0.93	18
Overall scale	0.96	59

The findings listed in the Table 2 show that the correlation among the four subscales is not high, which supports the construct validity of the instrument. In addition, there is a high correlation between each of the four subscales and the overall scale, suggesting that they measure the same phenomenon that the whole scale is intended to measure. Based on this evidence, it is clear that the scale has acceptable levels of reliability and validity that justify its use in this study.

Table 2

*The Correlation between the Four Subscales and the Overall Scale*

Scale/Subscale	Personal and emotional adaptation	Attachment	Academic adaptation	Social adaptation	Overall scale
Personal and emotional adaptation	1.00	0.65	0.55	0.23	0.73
Attachment		1.00	0.18	0.52	0.71
Academic adaptation			1.00	0.53	0.90
Social adaptation				1.00	0.68
Overall scale					1.00

Note. All correlations are significant at .01 level

**Students' GPA scores.**

Subjects of the study were classified into two groups based on their GPA: students under academic probation scored 2.00 or below out of a total of 4.00, while outstanding students scored 3.00 and above.

**Data collection**

For purposes of data collection, a specifically modified version of the Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was sent by e-mail to students at the University of Sharjah, who were asked to fill it in electronically. Clear instructions on how to fill in the questionnaire were provided and students were informed that their responses would be strictly confidential and only used for scientific purposes.

**Research Design and Statistical Analysis**

This is a descriptive study and has included the following variables:

1. Academic achievement that includes students with a GPA of 2.00 and below and those with a GPA of 3.00 and above
2. The overall scale and the four subscales of the academic adaptation scale.

In order to answer the study questions, the mean, standard deviation and the relative importance (rank) of the subjects' performance on the sub-scales, and the overall scale measured by the academic adaptation scale were calculated. In addition, the scores of two independent samples were calculated.

**Findings and Discussion****Findings and discussion related to the first question**

In order to answer the first study question, the arithmetic mean scores, standard deviation and the relative importance(rank) of the subjects' performance on the four sub-scales, all items of the questionnaire and the overall scale measured by the SACQ were calculated (see Table 3 below).

Table 3  
Means, Standard Deviations, and the Relative Importance (Rank) of the Subjects' Performance on the Four Sub-Scales, All Items of the Questionnaire and the Overall Scale Measured by the SACQ

Subscale	Item No.	Item	M	SD	Rank
Personal and Emotional Adaptation	1	Felt tense or anxious lately	2.94	1.30	6
	2	Unable to control my emotions well lately	3.03	1.40	5
	3	I have had a good appetite lately.	2.58	1.34	8
	4	Recently, I have had many thoughts that made me wonder whether I should seek help from the counselling centre or an outside specialist.	3.32	1.38	4
	5	Lost a lot of weight lately	3.65	1.29	2
	6	I do not sleep well lately,	2.71	1.30	7
	7	I am very concerned about my tuition fees.	3.89	1.21	1
	8	I find it very difficult to cope with all the study pressure I am facing.	3.47	1.32	3
<b>Total</b>			<b>3.20</b>	<b>0.89</b>	
Attachment	9	I meet a large number of people and make as many new friendships as I wish at college.	3.03	1.40	7
	10	I am pleased with my decision to go to college.	2.87	1.26	9
	11	I am satisfied with the number and type of training courses available at college.	3.81	1.42	2
	12	I find it difficult to feel at ease around others in college.	3.97	1.37	1
	13	I am looking forward to staying in the college till I have finished my bachelor's degree.	3.75	1.40	3
	14	I feel very different from other students in my college in matters that I do not like.	3.47	1.39	4
	15	I mostly prefer to be home (in my home country) rather than being here.	3.01	1.31	8
	16	Recently, I think more frequently about dropping out of college for good.	3.34	1.26	5
	17	I am completely satisfied with my social life at college.	3.14	1.43	6
<b>Total</b>			<b>3.40</b>	<b>0.92</b>	
Academic Adaptation	18	I keep up to date on my academic assignments.	3.55	1.28	2

Subscale	Item No.	Item	M	SD	Rank
	19	I know the reason for being at college or what I am expected to achieve.	2.31	1.31	24
	20	Academic tasks assigned to me are difficult.	2.35	1.23	22.5
	21	I did not perform well on exams.	2.49	1.33	9.5
	22	I am satisfied with my academic performance.	2.88	1.28	12
	23	I do not work as hard as expected to accomplish the required academic assignments on the different courses.	2.61	1.30	17
	24	I have clear academic goals and objectives.	3.21	1.19	4
	25	I am not smart enough to accomplish the academic tasks that are currently required and expected of me.	2.73	1.59	15.5
	26	I consider getting a university degree to be very important.	2.55	1.36	17
	27	Recently, I have not managed my study time effectively enough.	2.35	1.37	22.5
	28	I enjoy writing the required course reports.	2.89	1.43	11
	29	In fact, I was not motivated enough to study.	3.44	1.42	3
	30	I have lately started to have doubts about the value of a university education.	3.69	1.44	1
	31	I am satisfied with the number and variety of the available courses in the College.	3.00	1.46	7
	32	Recently, I find it difficult to concentrate when I try to study.	3.18	1.30	5
	33	My academic performance is not satisfactory enough considering the amount of time spent on accomplishing assigned tasks.	3.11	1.41	6
	34	I am satisfied with the number of courses offered by the College.	2.96	1.35	8
	35	I make sure to attend lectures regularly.	2.36	1.27	20
	36	I enjoy my academic work.	2.81	1.39	13
	37	I find it very difficult to start the required academic tasks.			
	38	I am pleased with my study programme or the courses I am registered in this semester.	2.39	1.18	20

Subscale	Item No.	Item	M	SD	Rank
	39	The majority of my interests are not related to tasks required in the courses I am registered in at college.	2.94	1.27	9.5
	40	I am very satisfied with the faculty teaching me this semester.	2.73	1.20	15.5
	41	I am very satisfied with my academic situation.	2.80	1.32	14
<b>Total</b>			<b>2.82</b>	<b>0.61</b>	
Social Adaptation	42	I feel that I fit in well with the college environment.	2.77	1.24	12
	43	I meet a large number of people and make as many friendships as I want in college.	2.88	1.29	10
	44	I am very involved in the social activities of the College.	3.47	1.38	3
	45	I am well adapted.	2.68	1.20	14
	46	I have adequate opportunities to personally communicate with college faculty.	2.49	1.26	17
	47	I am pleased with my choice of this particular college.	2.24	1.24	18
	48	I have several close social ties in the College.	2.71	1.28	13
	49	Being lonesome for home is my main difficulty at present.	3.77	1.35	1
	50	I enjoy living in the university dorm. (This question is only for students who live in the student dorms.)	3.46	1.29	4
	51	I am satisfied with the extracurricular activities offered by the college.	3.35	1.25	5
	52	I get along well with my dorm roommates. (This question is only for students who live in the student dorms.)	2.81	1.32	11
	53	I feel that I have adequate social skills to form good social relationships at college.	2.62	1.18	15
	54	I find it difficult to feel at ease with other at college.	3.19	1.22	6
	55	I am satisfied with the level of my involvement in social activities at college.	3.13	1.21	7
	56	I have started to feel lonely lately.	3.14	1.50	8
	57	I feel different from others in undesirable ways.	3.08	1.32	9



Subscale	Item No.	Item	M	SD	Rank
	58	I would probably rather be home (or in my home country) than here.	3.59	1.35	2
	59	I have some good friends and acquaintances with whom I can discuss any problems I may face.	2.58	1.32	16
<b>Total</b>			<b>2.97</b>	<b>0.66</b>	
Overall scale			3.004	0.56	

It can be seen in Table 3 that the mean scores on the personal and emotional adaptation subscale ranged from 2.58 to 3.89 ( $M= 3.175$ ). The arithmetic mean scores on the different items included under this subscale show that item 7, (I am very concerned about my tuition fees), ranked first with an average of 3.89. This should not be taken to mean that students do not face many problems with this aspect of their university life; however, many may come from well to do families who can afford their university fees and so students may not be under so much financial pressure. Meanwhile, recent weight loss (item 5) ranked second with an average score of 3.65. This again may not affect a student's personal and emotional adaptation. The aspect that seems to pose the most difficulty for students is having a good appetite. This item ranked last with an average score of 2.58. This can be related to several factors such as students' perception of their inability to adapt to some stressors or aspects of university life. Similarly, problematic was item 6, which ranked second last with an average of 2.71. The total average score on this subscale (3.20) was higher than its median (3.00). This indicates that the subjects of study are well adapted, personally and emotionally, in spite of facing some problems with a number of aspects included under this sub-scale. However, it is important to note that the arithmetic mean score was only slightly higher than the median. This means that this aspect of students' adaptation should receive more attention as it plays a major role in maintaining an individual's psychological wellbeing and, consequently, in his/her whole life.

The arithmetic mean scores on the attachment subscale ranged from 2.87 to 3.97 with a median of 3.34. Ranked first was item 12, (I find it difficult to feel at ease around others in college), with an average score of 3.97. This was followed by item 11 which had a small difference of 0.16. Item 13, (I am looking forward to staying in the college till I have finished my bachelor's degree), ranked third with an arithmetic mean score of 3.75. The item that ranked last was number 10, which referred to students being 'pleased with [their] decision to go to college.' This is the only item to receive an average score below 3.0; it was 2.87 to be precise. This dissatisfaction might be attributed to the fact that in our society it is the parents who make such decisions rather than the students themselves. However, the arithmetic mean score on all other items surpassed 3.0. This indicates that overall students have a positive perception of the University, feel comfortable being there and prefer to continue their studies at the same university. The total average score for this subscale reached 3.40, which is also a strong indicator of a high degree of attachment and commitment to the educational objectives of the University. Furthermore, a standard deviation of 0.92 suggests that there is a high degree of uniformity among students in relation to their attachment to their university.

Arithmetic mean score on the academic adaptation subscale ranged from 2.31 to 3.69 (median= 2.84). Within this subscale, item 30, (I have lately started to have doubts about the value of a university education), ranked first with arithmetic mean score of 3.69. This indicates that this aspect does not pose problems to the subjects of the study. This is also the case with the second and third-ranked items (18 and 29) with average scores of 3.55 and 3.44 respectively. Aspects that seem to be troubling for these students were those that referred to the perceived difficulty of academic assignments (item 20), efficiency of using study time (item 27), and knowing the reason for studying at university and the expected outcomes (item 19), which ranked last with arithmetic mean scores of 2.35, 2.35 and 2.31, respectively.

The overall arithmetic mean score for this subscale was 2.82. This suggests that the majority of participants are struggling with the academic demands they face at college and completing their academic tasks. This can be attributed to a number of factors, the most significant of which might be their inability to efficiently manage their time and the difficulty of the tasks assigned to them. This argument could be defended by looking at the arithmetic mean score of the item related to time management (item 27), which was significantly low at 2.35.

Arithmetic mean scores on the social adaptation subscale ranged from 2.24 to 3.77 with a median of 3.025. Of the items included under this subscale, item 49, which refers to homesickness, ranked first with an arithmetic mean score of 3.77. This indicates that the participants faced no difficulty with this aspect of their university lives. This can be explained by the fact that youngest people nowadays feel the urge to become independent, especially at a stage in their lives when they seek to shape their own identity and build relationships with their own peers that might be even stronger than those they have with their families. What supports this claim is that the item that refers to whether a student 'would rather be home instead of' at university ranked second ( $M = 3.59$ ). Furthermore, item 44, which measures a student's participation in 'social' events, ranked third with an arithmetic mean score of 3.47.

The item that ranked last was number 47, which referred to the students' satisfaction with their choice of a particular college (average=2.24). This is consistent with the subjects' response to item 10 on the attachment subscale, (I am pleased with my decision to go to college). The fact that both these items ranked last in their respective subscales indicates that participants face some problems with their desire to attend college in general. Another item that ranked low on this subscale with an arithmetic mean score of 2.49 was item 46. This item refers to the opportunities available to students to communicate with faculty, and so

indicates a lapse in this area in spite of the fact that faculty have scheduled office hours where they are expected to meet with their students. The subjects also seem to find it difficult to form friendships as item 59-ranked 16th with an arithmetic mean score of 2.58.

The overall arithmetic mean score of this subscale was 2.97, which is slightly lower than the median (3.0). It can be said then that the participants found it difficult to adapt socially, especially in such areas as forming social ties and friendships with their peers, or having personal contact with their teachers. This means that academic adaptation is a significant aspect of general adaptation to college and a strong indicator of students' psychological wellbeing. This is because it has a strong impact on students' social interaction and academic achievement. The cognitive theory postulates that adaptation requires constant changes in the cognitive schemata on the part of the individual. It also suggests that an individual modifies certain adaptation patterns according to changes taking place around him/her using successful strategies.

Considering these results, it can be argued that our findings are consistent with that of Calaguas (2011) where the subjects found it difficult to adapt academically. Our findings are also consistent with those of Khairallah (1981) which showed that there were low levels of academic, personal and psychological adaptation among university students. Similarly, Hassan and Saleh (2008) found that first year students experience problems adapting academically, psychologically and socially. Bragg (1995) also found that subjects of his study required assistance to adapt academically.

However, the findings of this study are not compatible with that of Abdulrahman's (2012) that showed the existence of positive adaptation on all three subscales. In addition, Habaib and Abu-maraq (2009) found positive adaptation among the participants on all three subscales measured in their study. Another study conducted by El-mneizel and Sulaiman (1999) found that students were consistently adapted on all but the social subscale. A

further study that contradicts our findings is that of Alaqeed (1990), which found that there was a healthy adaptation to all the sub dimensions of the scale.

### Findings and discussion related to the second question

The second question of the study asks whether there are significant differences in academic adaptation and can this be attributed to the level of academic achievement of students. Means, standard deviations, and t-test for two independent samples based on the academic achievement variable were calculated (see Table 4 below).

Table 4

*Means, Standard Deviations and T-Test for Differences between Performance Averages on the Subscales and Overall Scale of the Adaptation to College Scale in Relation to the Level of Academic Achievement Variable*

Subscale	Academic Achievement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degrees of Freedom	t-Value	Probability
Personal and Emotional Adaptation	Outstanding students	3.32	0.90	199	3.61	0.00
	students under academic probation	2.81	0.74			
Attachment	Outstanding students	3.45	0.92	199	1.90	0.05
	students under academic probation	3.16	0.90			
Academic Adaptation	Outstanding students	2.88	0.63	199	2.18	0.03
	students under academic probation	2.66	0.53			
Social Adaptation	Outstanding students	2.99	0.68	196	0.51	0.60
	students under academic probation	2.93	0.60			
Overall Scale	Outstanding students	3.07	0.57	199	2.44	0.01
	students under academic probation	2.84	0.50			

Statistical findings illustrated in Table 4 show that there are apparent differences between outstanding students and those under academic probation, in favour of the first group of students. In order to ascertain that these differences are statistically significant ( $\alpha=0.05$ ), we computed t-tests for two independent samples for differences in performance on all four subscales, and the overall scale against the academic achievement variable.

The findings of the study, as listed in Table 4 above, show that there are statistically significant differences between the two groups of students on the personal and emotional adaptation, and the academic adaptation subscales, in favour of outstanding students where the t-value reached 3.616 and 2.184 for the two groups respectively with degrees of freedom of 199. Conversely, no statistically significant differences were found on the other two subscales. The t-value for attachment was 1.906 and degrees of freedom of 199, whereas that for social adaptation was 0.515 and degrees of freedom of 196. These are not statistically significant values where  $\alpha=0.05$ . As for the overall scale, it was found that there were statistically significant differences between the two groups in favour of outstanding students where the t-value, with degrees of freedom of 199, was 2.447. This strongly indicates that student adaptation to university life, especially in such areas as the personal-emotional and the academic, may have a greater impact on their academic achievement as compared with their peers. The findings also explain why academic achievement has such a significant effect on students' academic, psychological and social adaptation. A student's adaptation to university life is the outcome of the interaction of several factors such as his/her mental abilities, study interests, and family circumstances. Yet academic achievement remains the most significant factor, as it is the result of the whole learning process that is presented as course average scores and students' GPA, which are reached through standardized exams on all courses. To add, a student's motivation to succeed academically is related to various factors such as personality, and the home and university environments that ultimately affect his/her whole life. Like all other individuals, students have their own motives, and emotional and social needs that they seek to fulfil. It is their ability to fulfil these needs that determines their ability to adapt (see Alshebani, 1978). In addition, students employ a variety of strategies and coping mechanisms to deal with the demands of university life. Therefore, the poorer these strategies and mechanisms are, the harder it becomes for them to deal with academic

studies in all its aspects, and so they face multiple obstacles (see Altahan, 1992). It is for this reason that Ellis and other proponents of the cognitive theory suggest that well-adapted individuals are those who think logically and rationally in such a manner that prevents the development of any psychological problems (see Derlega and Janda, 1986). Generally speaking, our findings are consistent with those of many studies that found a link between academic achievement and academic adaptation of outstanding students such as Alrafou'a and Alqara'a (2004), Alqudah (2007), Day (1999), and Baker and Siryk (1989).

The results of this study also differ from those obtained by Alhori & Sa'ad (Alhori & Sa'ad, 2000), Mohamed, Ali & Gergees (Mohamed, Ali, & Gergees, 2007) and Sarayah (Sarayah, 2016) which indicated that there was no apparent differences between levels of academic and social adaptation.

### Recommendations and Suggestions

Based on the results of the study, we can make the following recommendations:

1. It is important for universities to enhance the positive personal traits of the students and motivate them to better perform academically. In addition, it is essential to continue to resolve issues that hinder students' academic adaptation.
2. Modify and improve university courses and teaching methods so they focus more on the applied and practical aspects. Furthermore, vary extracurricular activities to decrease the pressure of students' academic workload
3. Create a vibrant university atmosphere that offers varied activities that meet students' needs.
4. Actively promote preventative awareness raising programmes for university students and conduct training programmes that may help them better perform academically.

5. Improve the quality of psychological counselling services at the university.
6. Continue offering psychological and social support in order to enable students to maintain their academic adaptation.

In addition to these recommendations, we can suggest the following:

1. Conduct more studies on academic adaptation and its relation to other variables such as anxiety, depression and perception of self and compare their findings to those of this study.
2. Design several psychometric instruments that could facilitate the early detection of mental problems, which may hinder academic adaptation among students.
3. Devise state-of-the-art programmes to support students' psychological and social adaptation, and acquisition of such skills as managing their reactions.

### Conflict of Interest

The researchers reported that there is no conflict of interest regarding research, intellectual property, and publication of this research.



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