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Influence of Socio-Economic Status on Social Adjustment of University Students

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate how undergraduate students' social adjustments at the university level are impacted by their socioeconomic status. The study's population consisted of all Sargodha University undergraduate students enrolled in various departments. A total of 550 students were chosen at random from 11 different departments. The Socio-economic status survey for students and the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) research scales were modified and employed; the corresponding Cronbach Alpha values were 0.90 and 0.79. This descriptive study employed the survey technique. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the data analysis process. Major findings were that the majority of students had moderate levels of social adjustment and were from moderate SES backgrounds. Moreover, the majority of the students were better at socially adjusting to others. *Male students were better than female students in their social adjustment whereas students with low SES had better social adjustment than students with moderate & high SES. Then, It is suggested that department administrators should arrange student-exposure events including lectures, seminars, group projects, and discussions. The results of this study also showed that teachers' educational practices can be greatly enhanced if they take appropriate considerations into account when taking such activities for the social adjustment of university students.*

Keywords: Undergraduate Students, Socio-Economic Status, Student-Exposure, Social Adjustment.

Introduction

Students admitted to university have a variety of characteristics, including gender, age, family history, socioeconomic level, native languages, ethnic composition, and academic aptitude. University is a more dynamic environment than college, where students face a variety of situations, decisions, learning challenges, and responsibilities while simultaneously adjusting intellectually and socially (Kerr, Johnson, Gans, & Krumrine, 2004). Adjustment is sometimes called adaptation and is the effort of a person that continues in the environment either physical or social (Raju & Rahamtulla, 2007). Moreover, the Adjustment process helps to cope with conflicts, stress, and tensions, and encounter personal goals. In this progression, every person tries to make and maintain an association with the atmosphere. The adjustment process consists of two components intricated in it i.e. the environment and the person. When students coming from various backgrounds have different norms and values and get enrolled in an educational institution, have to face the values and norms core values of the institution, the vision, and the mission. Here students will be required to change themselves by molding their behaviors and caring for the values and norms of institutions to fit in the new environment (Robinson, 2009).

Every student behaves differently, depending on the developmental stage, to adjust himself to the new environment of the institution. Dyson and Renk (2006) found similar results that in a university environment, every new student with her or his own pace of development, goes through an adjustment phase. Students have to deal with several new situations in a university that they did not face during college education, including academic setup, new teachers, and new friends in a new environment and lifestyle.

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Lapsley and Edgerton (2002) were of the view that, in university, a student struggling may not successfully manage these new challenges and have to face misery and nervousness. McDermott and Pettijohn (2011) concluded that students' rate of psychological indisposition is very high.

Social adjustment is essential for all students and can be of dire consequence as they are in the transition process from their family and home to a university setting. Students' overall adjustments depend upon the social adjustment in the university atmosphere (Raju & Rahamtulla, 2007). The views of Dyson and Renk (2006), are that students sharing in group activities and pleasure with the communal part of the environment of the university. Newly admitted undergraduates encounter a variety of academic, cultural, emotional, intellectual, economic, and social issues.

Socioeconomic status (SES) is a status that a person or group earned in the social structure and ladder of society (Chytrý, et al. 2022), Socioeconomic status is assessed through indices by the person's occupation, income, and educational levels, (Fouad and Brown (2001). SES scores are distributed into three levels i.e. low-SES or working people, middle-stature with middle SES, and upper level with high-SES (Ostrove & Cole, 2003).

Rationale

To handle the new academic challenges that arise in university life, students must make new friends (Monroe, 2009). Because they were previously spoon-fed by their teachers, students are unaware that they possess the ability to overcome new problems and gain new experiences with autonomous thinking (Robinson, 2009). It is a well-established reality that university students must adapt to changing practices on multiple levels (Clark, 2005). Whereas the SES of the student is noteworthy from educational and psychological points of view because it is a central element of adjustment (Sharma & Dhakad, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

A huge number of students entered Sargodha University to join undergraduate programs of diverse disciplines. All the students originate from different areas with different ethnic, cultural, social, and religious backgrounds. They were used to of college environment fairly different from the environment they faced in university, concerning the mode of education, and social and academic activities. Hence this study was opted to investigate the influence of the socio-economic status of students on social adjustment of undergraduate students of Sargodha University.

Objectives of the Study

i. To find out the influence of the socio-economic status of undergraduate students on their social adjustment.
ii. To explore the gender-based differences in SES and social adjustment.

Research Questions

1. What is the difference between the SES level of male and female undergraduate students of the University of Sargodha?
2. What is the difference between the social adjustment levels of male and female undergraduate students?
3. What is the influence of Sargodha University male undergraduate students' SES on their social adjustment?

Conceptual Framework

Family support is an important factor in the lives of students (Gobena, 2018). In educational institutions, students learn not only from the teachers but also from the fellows and institutional environment. A student with weak social adjustment may face problems in learning. Conversely, students with strong SES can get adjusted well in the educational institutions environment and learn better (Parker et al., 2022).

Significance of the Study

The SES of students can influence their social skills which may turn into social adjustment. Knowledge of SES and social adjustment of students may be helpful for educational managers and teachers to cope with the problems of social adjustment of the students to improve their social skills.

Research Methodology

This descriptive study was carried out through the survey method. The study was delimited to the University of the Sargodha. The University of Sargodha is rapidly rising in terms of the number of students admitted to various undergraduate programs. Due to budget constraints and scheduling

constraints, this study was strictly limited to undergraduate students. The study comprised second-semester students who were failing to integrate socially in their new surroundings.

Population and Sampling

The population was made up of all second-semester undergraduate students from the various departments of the University of Sargodha. Initially, a two-stage random sampling method was employed. A random selection of 50 students was done from each of the 11 departments at Sargodha University, resulting in a sample of 550 students, of which 296 were female and 254 were male.

Research Instruments

Two adapted instruments were used for data collection. One was a sub-scale named social adjustment part of the "Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire" originally developed by Dahmus, Bernardin, and Bernardin (1992) was adapted from 9 points to a five-point rating i.e. Strongly Agree, to Strongly Disagree, to measure the student's social adjustment in university consisting 17 items for the factors, General (7 items), Other people (6 items), Nostalgia (02 items) and Social environment (02 items). The scale was open to use. The second instrument was a socio-economic status survey for students about their parents' monthly family income, profession/occupation, and education. All the information was coded and given a specific score by Arif (2015) ranging from 0 to 33 and split into three categories i.e. low level (0 to 11), moderate level (12 to 22), and high level (23 to 33). Both the instruments were validated through the expert opinion of five Ph.D. educationists and then pilot-tested on 100 students of two departments other than the sample. Reliability coefficient Cronbach Alpha values were 0.79 & 0.90 respectively.

Data Collection

The scales were administered by researchers personally to the selected classes.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed through frequencies, mean scores, standard deviation, t-test, and ANOVA.

Table No.1

Overall and gender-wise Students' SES Level

Level (Mean Value)	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Low (≤11)	101	55.8%	81	22%	182	22.18%
Moderate (12-22)	67	37%	254	68.8%	321	58.36%
High (23-33)	13	7.2%	34	9.2%	47	8.54%
Total	181	100%	369	100%	550	100%

The above table describes that (n=182) students belong to low SES with a mean social adjustment score (of M=55.86, SD=9.79); whereas the majority (n=321) students belong to moderate SES with a mean social adjustment score (of M=53.60, SD=9.85) and while a little number of students (n=46) were in the category of High SES with (M=53.36, SD=9.31). This table shows that the majority of the students had moderate SES backgrounds.

Categorization of Social Adjustment

The minimum score on the social adjustment scale was 21, and the highest score was 81. The scores were arranged into three categories i.e. high, low, and moderate according to the recommendation of Cohen and Lea (2004). The first low-level category of social adjustment was formed by subtracting the standard deviation from the mean score; for the second category. moderate level, standard deviation was added up into the mean score and Mean scores greater than 65 were taken as the high level of social adjustment.

Table No.2

Gender-based Social Adjustment Level of Students

Level (Mean Value)	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Low (< 44)	18	10%	68	18.4%	86	15.6%
Moderate (45-64)	129	70.8%	248	67.4%	377	68.5%
High (> 65)	36	19.8%	51	13.8%	87	15.8%
Total	181	100%	369	100%	550	100%

The above data analysis revealed that 10% of male students (18) and 18.4% of female students (68) were in the low category of social adjustment, while in the moderate social adjustment category, 70.8% of males (129) and 67.4% females (248) were placed. The lasting 19.8% of male

students (36) and 13.8% of female students (51) had social adjustment levels as high. Overall majority 68.5% of students (377) reflected a moderate level of social adjustment.

Table No.3

Factor-wise Analysis of Social Adjustment

S#	Statements	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	Mean	SD
1	General Social Adjustment	1014	1550	350	540	396	3850 100%	3.58	1.31
		26.3%	40.2%	9.9%	14.02%	10.2%			
2	Adjustment with other people	1144	1247	430	573	456	3850 100%	3.53	1.21
		29.7%	32.4%	11.1%	14.8%	11.8%			
3	Nostalgia	451	318	96	108	127	1100 100%	3.78	1.07
		41%	30%	8.7%	9.8%	11.5%			
4	Adjustment in the Social Environment	241	419	187	121	132	1100 100%	3.47	1.2
		21.9%	38.2%	17%	11%	12%			
	Overall Social Adjustment	4550	6468	2826	2984	2422	9900	3.59	1.19
		23.6%	33.6%	14.6%	15.5%	14.5%			

This table reflects that many (57%) of students agreed and strongly agreed about overall social adjustment. A majority (66.5%) of students agreed and strongly agreed about general social adjustment, similarly majority (82%) of students agreed and strongly agreed about adjustment with other people wise majority of 71% of students agreed and strongly agreed about nostalgia and the majority (60%) students agreed and strongly agreed about adjustment in the social environment of the university.

Table No. 4

Factor-wise Comparison of Students' Social Adjustment Based on Gender

Factors	Gender	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	*p-value*
General	Male	181	24.4	6.1	2.78	548	0.006
	Female	369	22.9	5.3			
Other people	Male	181	18.4	3.7	1.98	548	0.048
	Female	369	17.7	3.5			
Nostalgia	Male	181	5.7	2.1	-1.75	548	0.080
	Female	369	6.1	2.4			
Social environment	Male	181	7.0	2.1	0.90	548	0.365
	Female	369	6.8	2.1			
Overall Social Adjustment	Male	181	55.6	10.8	2.1	548	0.036
	Female	369	53.7	9.2			

The above data shows that the opinion of female & male students about the factor "General" was significantly different as shown by *t* = (2.786), df= 548, and *p* = 0.006< α=.05. Males (M=24.4 & SD +6.1) were better in general social adjustment than female students (22.9, SD 5.39). The difference in the opinion of male & female students about the factor "Other people" was also significant as shown by *t* = (1.982), df= 548 and *p* = 0.048< α=.05. Male students (18.37 & SD 3.7) were better in social adjustment with other people than female students (17.72, SD 3.5). But the difference of opinion between the male & female students was not significant concerning factors 'Nostalgia' (t= -1.75, df=548 & and *p* = 0.08< α=.05 and 'social environment' (t= 0.97, df = 548 & p = 0.365> α=.05) of social adjustment scale.

It also indicates that the social adjustment of males and females was significantly different as depicted by t= 2.100, df= 548, and p=0.036 < α=.05. It shows that male undergraduate students (M=55.59, SD=10.84) have a higher level of social adjustment than females (M=53.72, SD=9.24).

Table No.5

Comparing Social Adjustment through One-Way ANOVA concerning students' departments

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	*P-value*
Between Groups	1134.49	10	113.45	1.177	.303
Within Groups	51934.60	539	96.35		
Total	53069.09	549			

The above data depicts that the difference in the mean social adjustment of students (undergraduate) of different departments was not significant as reflected by F (10,539) = 1.177, p=0.303 > α =0.05.

Table No.6

Students' Social Adjustment Concerning SES through One-Way ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	*P-value*
Between Groups	644.774	2	322.387		
Within Groups	52424.324	547	95.840	3.364	.035
Total	53069.098	549			

This tabular data reflects the change in the average social adjustment of students relevant to different levels of SES i.e. Low (M=55.86, SD=9.79), Moderate (M=53.60, SD=9.85) and High (M=53.36, SD=9.31), of undergraduate students was significant as reflected by ANOVA values, F (2, 547) = 2.55, p = 0.078 > α =0.05.

Table No.7

Social Adjustment by Students' SES Levels Through Post-Hoc Comparison

(I) SES categories	(J) SES categories	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	P
low	Moderate	2.26	.906	.034

In the above-mentioned table, Tukey's HSD shows that the students' social adjustment relevant to the Low SES category was significantly better than the students in the Moderate SES category with a mean difference of 2.26 and p-value 0.03 < α = 0.05. While Low SES & High SES showed no significant difference. Similarly, students of Moderate SES and High SES also showed no difference in social adjustment; hence their tables are not produced here.

Conclusions and Discussion

The majority of students had moderate levels of social adjustment and were from moderate SES backgrounds. Male students had better social adjustment and participated more in social activities than female students on university campuses. This may be due to the more time spent by males on the university campus and larger social contacts as these results are similar to the results of the study of Al-Qaisy (2010) that male students had better-adjusting capacity than females because of their capability to make social contacts with other people in university premises, better than the females. Male students were better in general social adjustment and with other people than females but adjustment in the university environment and nostalgia both were equivalent.

The difference in social adjustment relevant to the SES of students was significant. Students with low SES had better social adjustment than students with moderate & high SES. The result was different from the report of Walpole (2003) found in his study "Socioeconomic status and college: how SES affects college experiences and outcome" that students having low SES have low involvement in social activities i.e. farewell parties, clubs, group interactions, etc. This difference may be due to the agrarian culture of the Sargodha region in which this difference is not counted too much.

Recommendations

In university, many students have low social adjustment. So, it is suggested that Department administration may conduct exposing activities for students such as group discussions, seminars, and group assignments for both male and female students. This will provide more opportunities for students to have better social adjustment in university and consequently, they will be able to have better academic adjustment as well.

Educational Implications

As many students especially female students are facing social adjustment problems, Departmental management and University teachers may organize such seminars and group activities to enhance the social adjustment of the students.

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