

EXAMINING GENDER DISPARITY, EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND SOCIAL ANXIETY IN ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT OF FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

BY

OLU-DANIELS BOLAJI GLORY

PSY/13/1279

A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY,
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE DEGREE (B.SC) IN PSYCHOLOGY.

OCTOBER, 2017

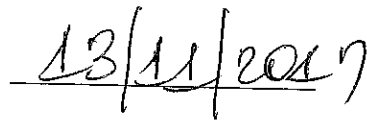
CERTIFICATION

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT OLU-DANIELS BOLAJI GLORY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OYE EKITI CARRIED OUT THIS PROJECT UNDER MY SUPERVISION



DR. A.M. LAWAL

SUPERVISOR

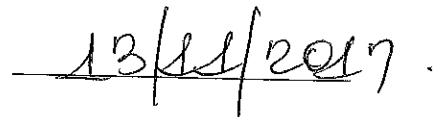


DATE



DR (MRS) A.OLATUNJI

H O D



DATE

EXTERNAL EXAMINER

DATE

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to ALMIGHTY GOD, the creator of the universe (both in heaven and on earth), the beginning and the end. In him, I give all the glory, honor, splendor and majesty for the breath of life and guidance. I give thanks to God for showing me his mercy and loving kindness in making this project a success.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My greatest gratitude goes to the ALMIGHTY GOD who has spared my life to this present moment, throughout this academic programme for His mercy endureth forever over my life, the Alpha and the Omega, the master planner, the creator of the universe, the author and the finisher of my faith during the odds of my life, my ever present help in times of trouble, who has helped me to commence and complete this course and this project to Him all thanks are due.

I can never forget the contribution of my parents Mr. Ibiyemi Olu-Daniels and Mrs. Funmilola Olu-Daniels for their full support for my academic pursuit, most especially their words of encouragement, their prayers, love and guidance during the good and bad times; they never stop believing in me. Daddy and Mummy may the LORD ALMIGHTY preserve your lives to reap the fruits of your labor. I also commend the efforts of my fellowship staff adviser and his wife in person of Mr. and Mrs. Elihabil for their ideal support spiritually, morally and financially during my academic years.

I express my gratitude to my entire family members, Tolani, Ilerioluwa, Joy and my aforementioned family members may God keep us united in one love forever.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Abiodun M. Lawal who in spite of his work and tight schedule created time for me, still gave me the necessary guidance and motivation. May the Good Lord continue to elevate him, Thank you Sir.

Besides, my supervisor, I am grateful to all the lecturers in the department ranging from the head of the department in person of DR (MRS) A. OLATUNJI and other lecturers in the department Mr. Israel, Dr Omole, Mrs. Azikwe and Dr. Olawa. MAY GOD ALMIGHTY BLESS YOU ALL.

My sincere gratitude and appreciation goes to my lovely friends, Toluwase, Kayode, Ifeoluwa, Okikioluwa, God's Power, and my brethren Bro Emmanuel and Mr. John.

Finally, special thanks to God Almighty, the owner of my life; the creator of everything who has given unto me, Olu-Daniels Bolaji Glory His wisdom, patience and the strength through my pursuits. To God is the glory.

I thank myself for not letting everybody down.

ABSTRACT

In Nigerian Universities, an essential factor is academic adjustment. There is always the need for adjustment among undergraduate students. This study examined gender disparity, emotional regulation and social anxiety in the academic adjustment of first year university students. This study adopted an ex post facto research design. A total of 297 participants were sampled in this study using convenience sampling technique. The participants' mean age was 19.24 years with standard deviation of 1.99 years. A structured questionnaire consisted of demographics and scales were used to collect data in this study. Three hypotheses were tested in this study using t-test for independent samples. Results showed that male significantly influence higher academic adjustment than female among first year university students ($t = 2.60$; $df = 295$; $p < .05$). Emotional regulation had no significant influence on the academic adjustment of first year university students ($t = -0.08$; $df = 295$; $p > .05$). Those who score low in social anxiety significantly influence higher academic adjustment than those who score high in social anxiety among first year university students ($t = -8.46$; $df = 295$, $p < .05$). Findings were discussed in the light of relevant literature. It is concluded that problems with academic adjustment among first year undergraduate students can lead to student's failure to complete educational program and drop out.

Keywords: Academic adjustment, gender disparity, emotional regulation, social anxiety, first year undergraduates.

Word Count: 233

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1:1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Getting admission into the University for the first time is a stressful experience for many undergraduates (Dyson & Renk, 2006). Undergraduates are sometimes faced with lots of new personal and interpersonal confrontations and the failure to meet these new oppositions and demands has been the most common reason for undergraduates being unable to complete their educational programme (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Studying in the higher institution exposes students to a variety of new challenges including academic demands, being independent for the first time in their lives, in sorting out their needs and academic activities than the previous education which they were dependent on their parents or care-givers (Crede & Niehorster, 2012).

A university is a new environment that triggers different responses among first year students. In other words, life at the University for the First Year Students can either be exciting or stressful as they need to meet the criteria of the institution they find themselves in (Habibah, Noordin, & Mahyuddin 2010). Although, increased personal freedom can either feel wonderful or frightening depending on the challenges they face. The university presents the opportunity to be more independent, as parental control is reduced and the student is faced with new found freedom. (O'Neill 2007). In addition, the student has to reconstruct his or her personal relations in the new environment they find themselves in and this sometimes causes a defect in bodily and mental functioning (Tao, Dong, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Pancer 2000). Failure to adjust springs up some maladjustment issues like psychological, health and school refusal or school dropout issues (psychology.wikia.com 2012).

First year students will encounter the challenge of adjustment. They often discover that the method of teaching and learning is quite different from those obtained from the high school level. Generally, learning in the higher institution has more challenges than in secondary school because the institution provides for more assignment, different reading culture, preparing for class presentations which they are not used to, tests and exams to evaluate achieved competence and many other challenges. Lecturers expect students to do more work aside the classroom in terms of research and never depending on what was taught in class. In order to adapt they must take more responsibilities for their actions. This condition can lead them to emotional tension. In some cases, undergraduate students can embark on various social vices in order to assist them to solve the pressure of life and responsibilities such as smoking and alcohol consumption (Salami, 2011).

Successful adjustment to school can be seen from their engagement in institutional activities, mental well-being and good academic performance (Julia & Veni, 2012). The appearance of new duties could propel them to doubt their own abilities to adjusting to their academic assignments and new ideology of their peers which then becomes pressure for them. Student proper adjustment would bring about a good academic performance (Abdullah & Elias, 2009). First year undergraduates will face adjustment problems because they are at the level of adolescence development. This is the time they face self-identity crises and meet the demands of other developments as a consequence of new challenges such as being separated from their parents (Wiley & Berman, 2013).

The National Center for Educational statistics has discovered that approximately one third of undergraduates abandon their studies without obtaining a degree and most do so during their first year (Brad burn & Carroll, 2002). Almost 30 to 40 percent of university students drop

out without obtaining a university degree, and many of these students never return to the university to complete university degrees (Consolvo, 2002). Individuals who are able to succeed at handling their autonomy and new found freedoms are able to make new relationships while maintaining old relationships (Holmbeck & Leake, 1999). Thus, gaining a better comprehension of what factors may promote positive adjustment among the first year undergraduate students is guaranteed. Two factors that have not often been considered but may potentially contribute to better adjustment in university students during their first year are being orientated to time that they are now undergraduates (Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, & Salomone, 2002) and good positive friends they mingle with (Fass & Tubman, 2002).

In the citadel of learning, (University) an essential factor is Adjustment. Rathus and Nevid (1986) explained that adjustment is a psychological concept that refers to the behavior that allows people to meet the needs of their environment. The adjustment process is the way individuals try to cope with stress, tension, conflicts and meet their needs (Julia & Veni, 2012). Adjustment is also defined as an individual interaction with the environment (Abdullah & Elias, 2009). According to Coleman, James C., Adjustment is the outcome of the individual's attempts to deal with the stress and meet his needs: also his efforts to sustain positive interactions with the environment. Adjustment can be defined as the process of adapting to a conduct of behavior suitable to the environment typically a response brought about by some type of change that has taken place. Adjustment to university is in multi dimensions which involve various demands which are in diverse forms and level which requires a variety of adapting mechanisms. (Baker & Siryk, 1984, 1986) Adjustment in the case of an individual consists of personal as well as environmental components. These two aspects of adjustment can be further subdivided into smaller aspects of personal and environmental factors. Broadly, there are important dimension of

adjustment in school; which are: Academic adjustment, psychological adjustment, social adjustment, adjustment within the self, adjustment to school buildings and routines.

Meanwhile, academic adjustment is the way of becoming accustomed to the role of being a student and to the different areas of the school setting. Academic adjustment is how well students cope with the demands of education, such as motivation to complete their academic requirements, academic effort and satisfaction with their academic environment. Thus, adjustment can be seen as a state in which the students consider their needs satisfied and their behavior conform to the demands of the environment (Salami, 2011). Adjustment is a psychological state that indicates mental health. This psychological state is closely related with emotional, social and educational areas. Academic adjustment is seen as one aspect of psychological and social adaptability which has been the focus of considerable study of researchers and scholars in the field of education. Academic adjustment evaluates student's abilities to see whether these abilities are adaptable with academic conditions and requirements in the school as a social institution. The student encounters these situations in the school and the psychologist studies learner's adjustment with these activities in the school (Pettus, 2006).

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, gender disparity also known as gender differences are differences in the mental functions and behaviors of the sexes, and are consequences of the complex interactions of biological, developmental and cultural factors. A great deal of research has been dedicated to determining how gender disparity influence student abilities to cope in the university. Studies exploring the relationship between gender and student academic adjustment have produced mixed results. However, some studies has shown that female outshine their male peers in the higher institution. (Lawrence, Ashford & Dent, 2006). Similarly, Betts and Morell (1999) asserted that gender remains a significant predictor of CGPA

after controlling for various individual characteristics such as ethnic background, pre-university grades and schools attended. Other studies mainly conducted abroad shows that females can perform at levels equal to males (Mayo & Christenfeld, 1999), Naderi, Abdullah, Aizan, Sharir & Kumar, 2009; Nori, 2002; Soares, Guisande, Almeida, & Paramo, 2009). Enochs and Roland (2006) examined the relationship among gender, academic, social and overall adjustment of first year undergraduates. The study found that males had significantly higher overall adjustment levels than females regardless of living environment.

Past studies on gender disparity in school adjustment has portrayed that females are better adjusted as compared to males. This has been shown in studies from the east and west. One such study used by (Wang, Thomas, & Ouellette, 1992) who used a sample of 390 students in their study. First year undergraduate students are in a new environment where they may not know anyone and programs that promote social relationships and connections can help students in not feeling isolated, depressed and eliminating their fears. Whiter (1997), in his study of 625 college students, found out that female students are more likely to experience loneliness and social isolation than their male counterparts. In addition, this study found that female students had a more difficult time adjusting into the university environment and were less likely to be involved in campus activities and hold leadership positions on campus. Tinto (1993) asserted that being able to manage and balance both social and academic life will help with the student adjustment process. According to research, how a student adjusts during their first year in the university builds bedrock for other events during their academic years on campus (Baker & Siryk, 1984).

However, academic adjustment is the same as overall adjustment, the product of various factors, such as family factors (Aminabad, Khodapanahi, & Dehghani 2011); Contreras, Kerns, Weirner, 2009; Simons, 1999), social factors (Finn, & Rock,. 1997; Floyd, 1996); individual

factors (Waxman, Huang, Anderson, & Weinstein, 1997) and interpersonal factors (Nota, & Soresi, 2003). Hence, one personal factor affecting academic adjustment is emotional regulation (Berkinga, Orth. & Wuppermance, 2008). Emotional regulation is the process through which individuals can control what to be excited over, when they should be excited and how they should express their excitement (Gross, 1998).

In the past two decades, studies on emotional regulation has become quite popular in the field of psychology and commonly refers to as measures taken by an individual to modify the natural course of affective responses. According to Thompson, 1994 defines emotion regulation as the intrinsic and extrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating and modifying emotional responses, especially their intensive and temporal features, to accomplish one's pursuits. Emotional regulation refers to the attempts individuals make to influence which kinds of emotions they have, when they have them and how these emotions are experienced and expressed. Such efforts can be relatively stable or controlled, conscious or unconscious. It has been posited that emotional regulation may involve up or down regulation of various aspects of positive and negative emotions (Parrott, 1993). In other words, emotional regulation is one of the various forms of affect regulation, all of which involve attempts to change some areas of the interactions between the individual and the environment that is interpreted by the individual in a good or bad manner.

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia defines emotional regulation as the ability to react to the ongoing demands of experience with the range of emotions in a manner that is socially acceptable and sufficiently flexible to enable spontaneous responses as well as the ability to delay spontaneous responses as needed. Emotional regulation is a complex process that involves initiating, inhibiting or modulating one's behavior in a particular situation. For example,

the subjective experience (feelings), cognitive responses (thoughts), emotion-related physiological responses (for example heart beat or hormonal function), and emotion-related behavior (bodily actions or expressions). Functionally, emotional regulation is a highly significant function in human life.

Emotional regulation also known as emotional adjustment plays a vital role in the academic adjustment of first year undergraduate students. Emotional regulation involves the mental state of students and the extent to which they are experiencing general psychological distress. The emotions of the first year students also got increased because of making a transition and fitting to the university aroused some anxiety and some sense of adventure because they had to adjust to the new patterns of behavior and social expectations, they experience emotional instability. In addition to, it has been noted that there are gender differences in how students regulate their emotions with regard to the habitual use of emotion regulation strategies. For example, females mostly use strategies that aim to solve a problem in order to feel better (i.e., problem-oriented strategies) more often than males do. While, males tend to emotionally disengage themselves from stressful situations (i.e., emotion-oriented strategies) more often than females do (Eschenbeck, Kohl, Lohaus, 2007).

Social anxiety is a state of emotional distress characterized by fear and avoidance behavior in real social situations (Puklek & Vidmar, 2000). First year students with social anxiety problems are prone to social and emotional problems in the first half and are likely to drop out from the university in their second year (Nordstrom, Goguen & Hiester, 2014). Also, social anxiety triggers symptoms of depression that require intervention (Nordstrom, Goguen & Hiester, 2014).

However, some of the problems that occur in first year students are anxiety, depression, loneliness and withdrawal from social interactions. Most first year undergraduate students have symptoms of anxiety that affect their academic adjustment, which means they are vulnerable to these symptoms (Kneipp, L. B., Kelly, K. E., & Cyphers, B. 2009). During their first year, they have a challenging transition period, because it is a period of adjustment from dependence on their parents or caregivers in achieving their needs, demands of academic and social relations towards independence in the higher institution (Arjanggi, 2013). However, studies examining gender differences in self-report measures of social anxiety produce mixed results. Some studies report significantly higher scores on social anxiety for females than males (e.g., Caballo, Arias, *et al.*, 2012), or no gender differences (e.g., Ranta *et al.*, 2012). Some population studies report that women score significantly higher than men on self-report measures of social anxiety (e.g., Banos, Botella, Quero, & Medina, 2007; Caballo *et al.*, 2008; Caballo, Salazar, Iurrtia, Arias, & Nobre, 2013; Hirai, Vernon, Clum, & Skidmore, 2011), whereas others found that women score higher than men, at a non-significant level (e.g., Stewart & Mandrusiak, 2007); finally, some studies report that men show non-significant higher scores than women (Hirai, Vernon, Clum, Skidmore ST. 2011; Lancu *et al.*, 2006).

1.2 Statement of Problem

Gaining an understanding of what factors contribute to a positive academic adjustment among university students will assist the first year students' adjustment process on campus. Two factors that have not often been considered but may potentially contribute to better adjustment in university students during their first year are being orientated to time that they are now

undergraduates (Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, & Salomone, 2002) and good positive friends they mingle with (Fass & Tubman, 2002).

Academic adjustment is the way of becoming accustomed to the role of being a student and to the different areas of the school setting. The failure to meet these new oppositions and demands has been the most common reason for undergraduates being unable to complete their educational program. Academic adjustment evaluates student's abilities to see whether these abilities are adaptable with academic conditions and requirements in the school as a social institution. The student encounters these situations in the school and the psychologist studies learner's adjustment with these activities in the school (Pettus, 2006). In a study conducted in a local public university in Malaysia, Abdullah and colleagues (2009) found that the best predictor of students' achievement was academic adjustment.

The National Center for Educational statistics found that approximately one third of undergraduates abandon their studies without obtaining a degree and most do so during their first year (Brad burn & Carroll, 2002). Almost 30 to 40 percent of undergraduates drop out without obtaining a university degree, and many of these students never return to the university to complete their program (Consolvo, 2002). Individuals who are able to succeed at handling their autonomy and new found freedoms are able to make new relationships while maintaining old relationships (Holm beck & Leake, 1999). A study conducted with Malaysian students found that first year university students faced health, financial and academic challenges (Ahmad *et al.* 2000). The students experienced a delay in the disbursement of their money and that the money did not meet their financial needs at university.

In South Africa, Cherian and Cherian (1998) reported that 33% to 85% of first year students drawn from the University of the North encountered various adjustment problems. A recent study found that a significant amount of South African tertiary students face financial problems as they live below the poverty line (Lloyd and Turale 2011). In essence, maintaining equilibrium between university students' needs and the school environment also poses challenges for students. Kupersmidt and DeRosier (2004) posited that first-year university students represent the main context in which many developmental adjustment problems will be addressed. Students just entering the university environment may deal with independence issues in response to the school environment requiring more self-reliance from them. In addition, the first year students are faced with the challenges of identifying, understanding and regulating their emotions in positive ways so as to adjust in the university environment academically and socially. However, teachers and parents demand for a better personality and academic status of their children as they enter the university. Students normally strike equilibrium between their emotional adjustment and academic adjustment on campus.

Past studies have shown that students that are unable to control their emotions will definitely find it difficult to adjust academically. This most times leads to frustration on the part of the students, thereby creating difficulties in students' academic adjustment. It is evident that emotional regulation helps university students to influence which kinds of emotions they have, when they have them and how these emotions are experienced and expressed to cope in their academic work and still maintain a better level of social interaction in their new environments. Students are confronted with adjustment problems, such as the stress associated with moving into the tertiary institution, changing lecturers, meeting the deadline for assignments and term papers, among others.

To date however, there have been few researches on the academic adjustment of first year university students. For instance: Dyson, R, & Renk, K. (2006) examined freshmen adaptation to university life: depressive symptoms, stress, and coping and Gerdes, H., & Mallinckrodt, B. (1994) examined emotional, social, and academic adjustment of college students: a longitudinal study of retention, but none has specifically looked at the academic adjustment of the population of interest in the light of examining gender disparity, emotional regulation and social anxiety in academic adjustment of first year university students. This propels the researcher to examine the influence of gender disparity, emotional regulation and social anxiety in the academic adjustment of first year university students. Hence, the researcher has deemed it necessary to carry out a study on this topic.

In this study, the researcher tends to provide answers to the following research questions

1. Is there a gender disparity in academic adjustment of first year university students?
2. Does emotional regulation influence academic adjustment of first year undergraduate students?
3. Does social anxiety influence academic adjustment of first year university students?

1:3 Objectives of Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of gender, emotional regulation and social anxiety on academic adjustment of first year university students. Specifically, this study intends:

1. To examine gender disparity in the academic adjustment of first year university students.

2. To find out the extent to which emotional regulation influence academic adjustment of first year undergraduate students.
3. To examine the influence of social anxiety on academic adjustment of first year university students.

1:4 Significance of the study

In its broadest sense, the outcome of this study is aimed at improving the existing body of knowledge by identifying factors that will contribute to academic adjustment. This study is useful to the university management in the area of understanding how to assist first year students in all areas of adjustment which involves academic, social emotional and institutional adjustment. This study can be a platform of knowledge for the society to use in tackling the problems, such as mal-adjustment, fear of negative evaluation (social anxiety) and emotional instability among first year students.

The findings will help look into the causes of mal-adjustment and provide possible solutions. Problems with academic adjustment among students should be given serious concern, as difficulties in student's adjustment can lead to student's failure to complete educational program and drop out. In essence, this indicates that this research work will be of great importance to individuals, institutions, teachers, counselors and psychologists to work hand-in-hand with the school management to create a friendly atmosphere that will enhance positive academic adjustment among first year university students. Also to other researchers, who may deem it useful and use it as a reference material.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews various theories relating to variables in the study as well as some related studies that have been done on it. This chapter consists of theoretical framework, theoretical conceptualization, related empirical studies, statement of hypotheses and the operational definition of terms.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Ideas come from a variety of sources, including existing theories, past research, current social events and personal experiences once a topic has been selected, researchers must not only become knowledgeable about past research findings in their area of interest, but also keep abreast of recently published studies and those reported at scientific meetings. A theory is an organized system of ideas that seeks to explain why two or more events are related. Put simply, a theory provides a picture of reality concerning some phenomena. What makes a good theory depends on a number of factors (Higgins, 2004; Nowak, 2004). The most salient factor is a theory's predictive accuracy. In other words, can it reliably predict behavior? A second factor is that it should have internal coherence- there shouldn't be any logical inconsistencies or unexplained coincidences among the theoretical principles and concepts. A third characteristic of a good theory is that it should be economical, meaning it includes the minimum number of principles or concepts necessary to adequately explain and predict the phenomena in question. Finally, a fourth and equally important quality in a good theory is fertility- the ability to generate sufficient interest in other scientists so that the theory is tested and extended to a wide variety of behavior. However, several theories will be reviewed for the purpose of this study. Therefore it is

necessary to examine some common theories in order to predict certain behaviors, enhance the discovery of new knowledge and assess its external validity.

2:1:1 THE SOCIAL-LEARNING PERSPECTIVE

According to Social learning theory, it is believed that much of human behavior is mostly developed and learned through imitation and modeling. Bandura (1977) proposed a social cognitive learning theory based on the premise that much of human learning occurs in a social environment. Bandura maintained that by observing others, individuals gain knowledge of the environment. They equally learn appropriate and acceptable behaviors by observing models and the consequences of modeled behaviors and they act by their beliefs concerning the expected outcomes of actions. Students adjust in the university environment socially by observing and imitating desired attitudes that are observed around them. Bandura maintained that the actions of others influence behavior at any point in time. Observational learning is the central feature of Albert Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, which contends that people learn social behaviors mainly through observation and cognitive processing of information, rather than through direct experience. Bandura's asserted that much of human learning occurs in a social environment. He maintained that by observing the behavior of others, individuals gain knowledge of their environment. Observational learning is learning by observing and imitating the behavior of others. These others whom we observe and imitate are called models because they teach us how to play social roles. They also learn desirable behavior and appropriate behavior.

McGhee and Frueh (1980) in his studies found out that the more visual display people watch like television the stronger gender beliefs they had, since gender roles are common place on most television display where we see women cooking, cleaning and taking care of the home while men are busy at their working place. However, Fagot (1985) explained that both male and female children are more critical of male children who exhibited female behaviors than of female children who exhibited male behaviors. Eccles (1987) observed that teachers commend male children for their academic performance while female children are praised for their tidiness and obedience.

As cited by Pfost and Fiore (1990) asserted that women receive more criticism than men in the workplace when they exhibit traditionally masculine jobs than men were when they do traditionally feminine jobs. Thus, social-learning theory is based on the premise that gender disparities arise mainly as a result of other people teaching us on how to behave. Therefore, the manner in which the society appreciates men and women and their expectations of them is the most important factors for determining gender disparities. Also, learned behaviors give rise to gender differences in men and women. Social influences that an individual receives determine the various conceptions of gender behaviors. For instance if a parent decides that their son should behave more feminine, then that is what will most likely happen irrespective of whether the boy had already learned and liked being masculine. In addition, gender disparities arise from gender roles that we learn from encounter with real people and fictional characters and people we will never meet like books, television, etc.

This theory will therefore be used to explain the variables in this study, which are: gender disparity, emotional regulation, social anxiety and the effect on academic adjustment of first year undergraduate students. In terms of emotion regulation, we cannot say parse that one gender

supersede another gender in terms of emotional regulation. But from the studies above, it gives credit to the male counterpart, due to their gender role. Stressing that first year male undergraduate would maintain stable emotional regulation, as a result of the what the society expect from their role and how this role should be carried out in any situation they confront on campus, without showing signs of been broken up, but sign of been made up from the stressors the male undergraduate encounter on campus. Although some female, sometimes maintain stable emotional regulation, as a result of how they imitate the male counterpart, in terms of some of the female are the one female children among the male children in the family, learning from their brothers, since there is no female around, apart from their mother, but these female children learn from their brothers as they are closer and play with their brothers. They imbibe the principles of the gender role of the male, to maintain stable emotional regulation.

However, the social learning theory suggests that our gender differences arise from social interactions with other human beings. The way a society values males and females and the subsequent expectations is one of the most important factors in explaining gender disparities. There are no naturally present psychological differences between men and women but through only learned behaviors. In correspondent to the above studies, social learning theory would be used to explain gender differences among first year undergraduate students and how it affects their academic adjustment processes. First year male undergraduate tend to adjust better academically as a result of their gender role which have been imbibed through learning from imitation from their father and what society dictate to be the actions of the male gender in the society, due to the role they have learned, they tend to adjust academically, thereby, they face what so ever challenges that comes their way on campus. Unlike the female undergraduate, which their gender role spell out their duties and how it affect their level of academic adjustment,

thereby, the female tends to listen to instruction and guidelines from their male counterpart to be able to adjust academically.

Finally, social learning theory gives an explanation on social anxiety. According to this theory, when you watch others engage in some activity with which you are not familiar, a great deal of cognitive learning takes place before you perform the behavior. We have the tendency to learn from other people's experience of an event, especially the events we are not familiar with. Cognitive learning takes place when people see others have negative views of social performance. Hence, one can acquire social anxiety by observing and imitating other people's behavior while performing it. First year students on entering higher institution, they are sensitized by the returning students on the way they should behave and relate with the school management officers which includes their lecturers, the school principal officers, they are informed about various attributes of their lecturers and the expectation as students towards them.

Whereby it affects their public speaking, through class presentations, responding to questions asked in class and other social performance they engage themselves in. However, this is due to the fear instilled into the minds of the freshmen by the returning students from the orientation of their lecturers if they do not properly carry out their responsibilities as expected by their lecturers and the lack of no mutual relationship with their lecturers which arouse anxiety. Also, social anxiety can be learnt by observing the punishment of some students when they violate the school rules and regulations which the consequence of their actions could lead to expulsion or suspension of those students from the university. Having the mindset that it is better to be careful or law abiding students than to be punished through expulsion or suspension. Thus, in relation to this study, this theory gives us an insight as to how through observation, one can acquire social anxiety without knowing.

Social learning theory can be used to explain academic adjustment among first year undergraduate students which is the how well students cope with the demands of education, such as motivation to complete their academic requirements, academic effort and satisfaction with their academic environment. We cannot conclude that first year male undergraduate student will adjust better academically than their female counterparts, however social learning theory gives more credit to male due to their gender roles which help them to confront interpersonal challenges that might arise during their academic sessions due to the coping skills and motivation learnt from their gender roles. Moreover, the first year female undergraduates learn to cope academically, by learning from the instructions and guidelines given by their male counterparts and also imitating the male counterpart actions. Therefore, first year university students usually find themselves in a new environment, and there is need to adjust to acceptable behaviors for an adequate academic requirement. Hence, adjustment can only be acquired by student's ability to imitate attitudes of other students around them.

2:1:2 THE PSYCHODYNAMIC MODEL

From the psychodynamic point of view, Sigmund Freud asserted that our behavior and the mental problems that we experience can be traced beyond our consciousness, our subconscious mind and the innate impulses that we may not be aware of, are what influence the way in which we behave. Many of our mental processes like motives, memories feelings and the likes are largely inaccessible to consciousness. However, in the light of this study, the psychodynamic model would be used to explain the following variables: gender disparity, social anxiety and how it affects the academic adjustment of first year undergraduates.

The psychodynamic theory provides explanations for gender disparities. Such explanation is directed to the role of the unconscious mind which according to the theory results in our gender differences. It suggests that gender identity and role are acquired during the third stage of psychosexual development, the phallic stage. Before this, in the oral and anal stages, the child does not have a gender identity and its sexual drives are directed indiscriminately. As the child enters the phallic stage, the focus of its libido moves to the genitals and the development of boys and girls diverge. Boys enter the Oedipus complex. They start to sexually desire their mothers. They realize that their father stands in the way of the satisfaction of their desire and this frustration of the id's desires results in aggressive feelings, which are directed towards their father.

At the same time, the boy realizes that his powerful than he is and starts to fear that if the father finds out about the boy's desire for his mother he will castrate him (castration anxiety). The boy deals with the conflict, this cause by starting to identify with his father and wanting to be like him. This leads to him internalizing his father, essentially incorporating his father into his own psyche. This becomes his superego and, in taking on his father as part of himself the boy takes on the male gender identity. He deals with his desire for his mother by displacing it onto other women. Girls enter the Electra complex, this starts with the realization that they have no penis. This leads them to believe that they have been castrated, something for which they blame their mother. Because she has no penis the girl sees herself as powerless, and wishes that she had one (penis envy) she starts to desire her father, because he has one and becomes jealous and hostile towards her mother, mirroring the Oedipus complex in boys. Eventually, she starts to identify with and to internalize her mother developing a superego and a female gender identity. At this point, she represses her desire for a penis and substitutes it for the desire for a baby.

In relation to this study, an individual who is unable to resolve the childhood conflicts during the psychosexual stage might have gender identity problems and have difficulty relating with the opposite sex. According to this theory, the unresolved conflict can lead to identity crises and identifying gender roles. First year students who have an unresolved unconscious conflict during childhood can repress it on to adulthood which can affect their relationships at school.

Social anxiety is believed to be a problem that develops during childhood. Scientists with this perspective view anxiety as a disorder that has its origin in childhood. Therefore, they results from a person's early experiences and attachments to parents or caregivers and other important individuals in one's life. Anxiety is a danger signal that threatening impulses of a sexual or aggressive (murderous or suicidal) nature are nearing the level of awareness. To fend off these threatening impulses, the ego mobilizes its defense mechanisms. In phobias, the Freudian defense mechanism of projection comes into play. A phobic reaction is a projection of the person's own threatening impulses onto the phobic object.

As regarding this study, the psychodynamic theory helps us to know that people with social anxiety avoid social situations because of the unconscious drives that guide them from having to overcome any impulsivity triggered by the situation. This type of avoidance is an unconscious but protective avoidance. For instance, first year undergraduate with social anxiety might have the desire to derogate others in social situations. They can decide to avoid any social situation that requires evaluation from others based on the unconscious motive to cope with any physiological symptoms they might experience in such situation like: racing heart, sweaty palms, shaking of the hands and legs, or panic attack, etc. first year students with social anxiety might have difficulty adjusting academically as this can affect other aspects of their lives and result to feelings of inadequacy, depression, loneliness, poor relationship with others and a low self-

esteem. Sigmund Freud believed that we repress socially unacceptable ideas; therefore a socially phobic individual may have unconscious motives keeping them away from social situations so that this unacceptable and impulsive behavior is avoided. According to this theory, social anxiety in first year students can be as a result of the following: An expectation of shame and humiliation elicited by critical or harsh parents, a conflict between the need to achieve and succeed, and the fear of success, a conflict between the need for independence and the fear of rejection or abandonment by one's parents or caregiver, the narcissistic fear of being unable to make a perfect impression. Each of these conflicts is believed to result in shame, social withdrawal, insecurity and low self-esteem.

2.1.3 THE COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE

Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy

Albert Ellis (1962, 1999) developed a form of cognitive therapy called rational-emotive Behavior therapy (REBT), which assumes that mental distress is caused not by objective events in people's lives but rather by irrational thinking people have about those events. The goal of REBT is to help people identify problems in the way they think about their general experiences and try to modify these cognitions. The irrational beliefs that cause emotional problems are based on what Ellis calls the "all-or-none types of thinking. For example, people who think they must be loved or approved by everyone, or that they must be successful in everything they do, are likely to feel unhappy all the time. By setting unreachable goals, they experience frequent disappointments. In REBT, when clients state their irrational beliefs, the therapists directly attacks this thinking, pointing out, how it is inevitably self-defeating, and persuades clients to

develop a more realistic way of evaluating their lives (Ellis, 2002) clients are also encouraged to try new behaviors that directly challenge their irrational beliefs (Ellis *et al.*, 2002). For example, if a woman is afraid that others won't like her if she disagrees with them; her therapist might instruct her to forcefully disagree with five people during the next week. The objective in such an exercise is for the woman to discover that her world doesn't end following such changes. Also, studies suggest that REBT does have some positive effects on clients' later adjustment and well-being (Engels, Garnefsky & Diekstra, 1993; Lyons & Woods, 1991; Moeller & Steel, 2002). Hence, the cognitive perspective will be used to explain social anxiety and emotional regulation and their effects on the academic adjustment of first year undergraduates.

In the case of social anxiety, negative core beliefs are long-held, negative belief you have about your incompetence in social situations. These beliefs are activated when you are in a situation that you perceived as threatening. Your core beliefs cause you to experience the negative symptoms of social anxiety, such as negative thoughts, a tendency to only see your weaknesses and an outward obsession of monitoring your own symptoms of anxiety (Hales & Yudofsky, 2003). First year students who have negative view about their abilities are likely to concentrate on the reactions of other people in any social situation. For instance: In a social performance like class presentation that gives room for evaluation from classmates as well as lecturers, the beliefs that an individual holds as regards his abilities and the situation he considers as frightening will affect the way he performs and handles criticisms from his peers. First year undergraduates are prone to social anxiety and this can affect their academic adjustment process on campus. First year students will encounter the challenge of adjustment. They often discover that the method of teaching and learning is quite different from those obtained from the high school level. Generally, learning in the higher institution has more challenges than in secondary

school because the institution provides for more assignment, different reading culture, preparing for class presentations which they are not used to, tests and exams to evaluate achieved competence and many other challenges. Lecturers expect students to do more work aside the classroom in terms of research and never depending on what was taught in class. They are in a transition period of dependence on their parents to taking responsibilities for their actions and gaining independence. They will have to adjust to the new environment, acceptable behaviors that will and meet the demands of the academic activities such as meeting the deadline for assignments, class presentations; writing a term paper work, etc. Hence, first year student who has negative beliefs about their competence in social situations might find it difficult to adjust academically and this can lead to avoidance and fear of being negatively judged (social anxiety).

However, the cognitive perspective provides an explanation on emotional regulation. Emotional regulation also known as emotional adjustment plays a vital role in the academic adjustment of first year undergraduate students. Emotional regulation involves the mental state of students and the extent to which they are experiencing general psychological distress. In this sense, the beliefs that students have about their kind of emotions they experience during an unpleasant situation and how they are able to control it positively will help their adjustment process. First year students are likely to express negative emotions in a situation they perceive as threatening or situation they are not familiar with. The core beliefs they have about the situation can synthesize negative emotions in them and the inability to regulate such emotions leads to emotional instability which affects their adjustment process in the institution. Also, emotional regulation serves as a predictor to adjustment.

2:2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

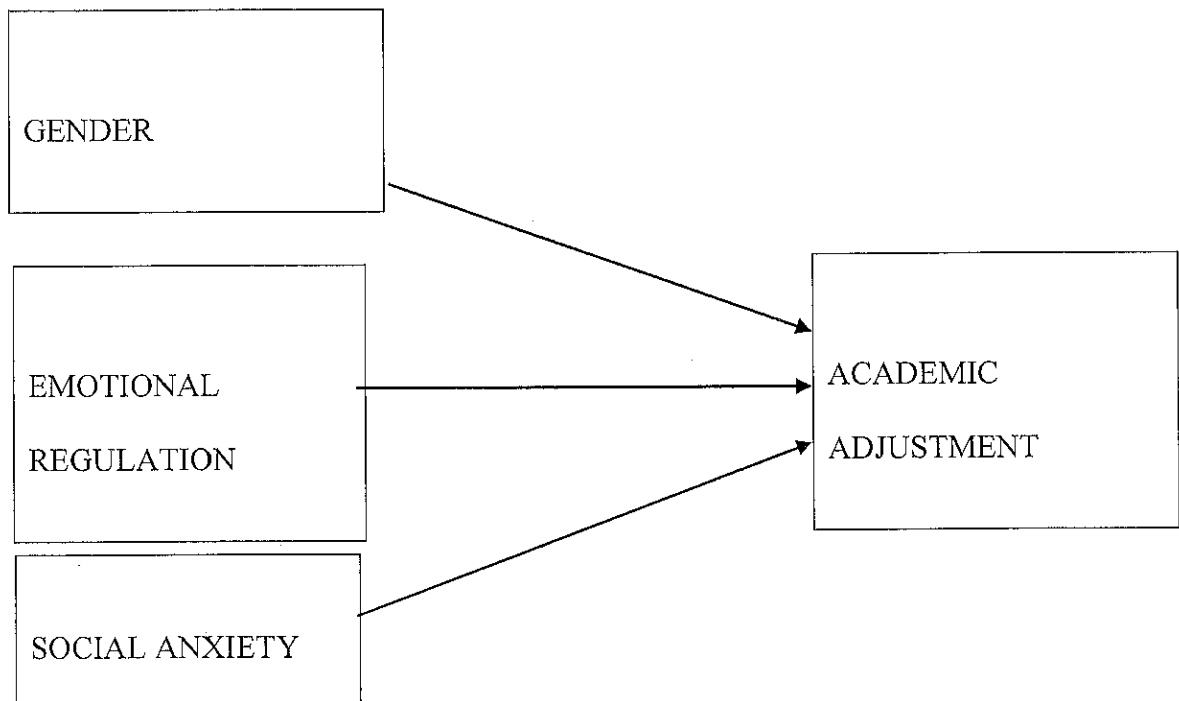


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework linking gender, emotional regulation and social anxiety with academic adjustment of first year undergraduates.

2:3 RELATED EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Humans as a social animal live in a society where we form judgments, feelings, and opinions about one another. Each individual has a dynamic and organized set of characteristics that he or she possesses that uniquely influence his or her cognitions, motivations and behaviors across various situations. Everyone wants to be accepted and recognized by others. We try to behave in a way that will conform to the norms and traditions of the society so that we can adjust with others. But it is not an easy task, because people possess unique characteristics and it has to fit in into the society. In essence, adjustment is complex term used in various areas of human

endeavors. For instance, if an individual is well adjusted at home, he will be able to adjust successfully at school and in the environment he finds himself. This is so, because psychologists use the term adjustment in social, academic and interpersonal relations in the society. Thus, adjustment can be interpreted as both a process and the outcome of the process in the form of some achievements. Adjustment is the process of altering of altering one's behavior to reach a harmonious relationship with their environment. Also, we see that adjustment means the reactions and demands to the pressures of the society imposed on the person.

Thus, academic adjustment is the way of becoming accustomed to the role of being a student and to the different areas of the school setting. Failure to adjust can lead to psychological health issues and school refusal or school dropout (psychology.wikia.com 2012). Academic adjustment is how well students cope with the demands of education, such as motivation to complete their academic requirements, academic effort and satisfaction with their academic environment. Academic adjustments are modifications in how students participate in classes and activities. These modifications allow students to meet standards, but do not change them. Academic adjustments give students equal access to the educational opportunities of the University.

Successful adjustment to school largely depends on past experiences at home and on the student skills and knowledge (Dockett, Perry & Tracey, 1997; Fabian, 2000). When individuals exhibit a range of social skills associated with cooperation, initiating conversations or assertions and self-control, they are more likely to adjust to school. Mal-adjustment may arise when students are non-compliant; disorganized, distractible; or when they are anti-social and have difficulty considering the right of others (Margetts, 2002). However, Maria *et al*, 2009 asserted that studies on student's adjustment have reported that the admission to university can be a

traumatic experience for many undergraduate students. (Cantor, Norem, Niedenth, Langston, & Bower, 1987; Perry, Hladkyj, Pekrun, & Pelletier, 2001), they are faced with different personal and interpersonal challenges. These challenges include the ability to form new relationships, to change existing relationships with parents and close relations and to develop learning habits for the new academic environment (Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan & Majeski, 2004). The inability to meet these demands and challenges appears to be a foremost reason why undergraduates drop out from the university (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994).

As cited by Smith and Renk (2007), the combination of various tensions of university life such as preparing for exams, meeting with the demands of challenging lecturers, making vital decisions, Planning for the future, struggling with assignments, and transitioning into emotional and financial independence can be an overwhelming experience for many students. Invariably, almost all first year university students pass through an adjustment phase upon admission into the university with each student varied with his or her own pace of adjustment (Blimling & Miltenberger, cited in Dyson & Renk, 2006). Hence, problems with academic adjustment among first year students should be given serious concern, as difficulties in student's adjustment can lead to student's failure to complete educational program and drop out.

2:3:1 GENDER AND ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Gender disparity also known as gender differences are differences in the mental functions and behaviors of the sexes, and are a result of the complex interplay of biological, developmental and cultural factors. Academic adjustment is how well students cope with the demands of education, such as motivation to complete their

academic requirements, academic effort and satisfaction with their academic environment. In other words, it is the ability of a student to achieve adjustment with university life and reach a level of satisfaction on his performance, peers, teachers and the environment as a whole.

A lot of research has been devoted to determining how gender disparities impacts undergraduate student's ability to succeed in higher education. Previous studies exploring the relationship between gender and the academic adjustment of students have produced mixed results some studies have found that females outshine their male counterparts in higher education (Lawrence, Ashford & Dent, 2006). Studies conducted overseas showed that females can perform at the same levels to males (Mayo & Christenfeld, 1999; Naderi, Abdullah, Aizan, Sharir, & Kumar, 2009; Nori, 2002; Soares, Guisande, Almeida, & Paramo, 2009). Similarly, Betts and Morell (1999) asserted that gender remains a significant predictor of CGPA after controlling for various individual characteristics such as ethnic background, pre-university grades and schools attended.

Previous studies on gender disparity in school adjustment has portrayed that females are better adjusted as compared to males. This has been shown in studies from the east and west. One such study used by (Wang *et al.* 2008) who used a sample of 390 students in their study. First year undergraduate students are in a new environment where they may not know anyone and programs that promote social relationships and connections can help students in not feeling lonely, depressed and can alleviate fears. Mc Whiter (1997), in his study of 625 college students, found out that female students are more prone to experience loneliness and social isolation than their male counterparts. In addition, this study found that female students had a more difficult time adjusting into the university environment and were less likely to be engaged in campus activities and less likely to have leadership positions in campus organizations. Tinto (1993)

asserted that being able to manage and balance both social and academic life will help with the student adjustment process. According to research, how a student adjusts during their first year in the university builds the ground work for other events during their college life (Baker & Siryk, 1984). Enochs and Roland (2006) investigated the interaction between living environment, gender and the overall adjustment of first year university students. The study found out that males had significantly higher overall level of adjustment than females regardless of living environment.

Lama (2010) reported that there is a great possibility for female students to experience problems in adjustment than male university students. This finding implies that male students are better adjusted on campus than female students. On the other hand, Roy, Ekka and Ara (2011) found out that female students are better adjusted on campus than male students. Enochs and Renk (2006) in their study reported that males adjust faster than females. Also, the study found out that females depend on social support more than their male peers. Tao *et al.* (2000) stated that peer influence and support are needed in student's adjustment on campus.

From these studies above, gender has shown mixed results whereby both male and female were able to adjust academically at the same rate where, some indicates those male students will adjust academically than female and some studies credits female will adjust academically than male. These shows that gender can influence academic adjustment of first year undergraduate students if carried out or researched into whereby gender is seen as a predictor of academic adjustment. This is how well first year male or female undergraduate cope with the demands of education, such as motivation to complete their academic requirements, academic effort and satisfaction with their academic environment.

2:3:2 EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT

According to Thompson (1996) defines emotional regulation as the internal and external processes which are responsible for controlling, monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional responses of the individual in the realization of his goals and behaviors. Previous studies on emotional regulation explained the roles and benefits attached to regulating emotion such as coping with basic tasks and solving them, behavior modification, and adaptability to the social environments and transferring feeling to others.

Academic adjustment is how well students cope with the demands of education, such as motivation to complete their academic requirements, academic effort and satisfaction with their academic environment. In other words, it is the ability of a student to achieve adjustment with university life and reach a level of satisfaction on his performance, peers, teachers and the environment as a whole. Adjustment with the university life is one important indicator of the academic adjustment and achievements in all areas of the university. Studies exploring the relationship between emotional regulation and student's academic adjustment have produced mixed results. Muni and Pavigrahi (1997) posited that females were better adjusted than males in emotional adjustment. The emotions of the first year students also got increased because of making a transition and fitting to college life aroused some anxiety and some sense of adventure because they had to make adjustments to new patterns of behavior and social expectations they experienced emotional instability. In addition to, it has been noted that there are gender differences in how students regulate their emotions with regard to the habitual use of emotion regulation strategies. For example, females tend to use strategies that aim to solve a problem in

order to feel better (i.e., problem-oriented strategies) more often than males do. In contrast, males tend to emotionally disengage themselves from stressful situations (i.e., emotion-oriented strategies) more often than females do (Eschenbeck *et al.*, 2007).

Rahamtullah (2007) in his study reported that males are significantly better adjusted than females in regulating emotions. Several studies suggested that ability to manage emotions is strong predictors of student's adjustment. Yip and Martin (2006) observed that the ability to manage and regulate emotions is an added value to personal sense of humor. In his study, Abdullah *et al.* (2004) established a strong correlation between student's level of emotional stability and academic adjustment among freshmen. However, other researchers found out that there is a significant relationship between emotional regulation and student's adjustment. Emotional regulation effects achievement indirectly. Emotionally unstable and maladjusted students have been observed to excel in their academics in proportion to their intelligence than students who are well balanced. Inability to achieve proper adjustment at university may be a precursor to psychological problems. In his study, Kitzrow (2003) stated that the number of university students struggling with mental health issues is increasing with universities labeled as perfect incubators of mental health problems.

From the studies above, the emotions of the first year students also got increased because of making a transition and fitting to college life aroused some anxiety and some sense of adventure because they had to make adjustments to new patterns of behavior and social expectations they experienced emotional instability. Past studies on emotional regulation has shown that students who are unable to control the kind of emotions they experience will have a difficult time adjusting to the school environment and this can have a negative impact on their

academics. Hence, emotional stability or regulation is a strong predictor of academic adjustment of students.

2:3:3 SOCIAL ANXIETY AND ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT

Social anxiety is a state of emotional distress characterized by fear and avoidance behavior in real social situations (Puklek & Vidmar, 2000). First year students with social anxiety problems are prone to social and emotional problems in the first half and are likely to drop out from the university in their second year (Nordstrom, Goguen & Hiester, 2014). Also, social anxiety triggers symptoms of depression that require intervention (Nordstrom, Goguen, & Hiester, M. 2014).

However, some of the problems that occur in first year students are anxiety, depression, loneliness and withdrawal from social interactions. Most first year undergraduate students have symptoms of anxiety that affect their academic adjustment, which means they are vulnerable to these symptoms (Kneipp, Kelly, & Cyphers, 2009). During their first year, they have a challenging transition period, because it is a period of adjustment from dependence on their parents or caregivers in achieving their needs, demands of academic and social relations towards independence in the higher institution (Arjanggi, 2013). However, studies examining gender differences in self-report measures of social anxiety produce mixed results. Some studies report significantly higher scores on social anxiety for females than males (e.g., Caballo, Arias, *et al.*, 2012), or no gender differences (e.g., Ranta *et al.*, 2012). Some population studies report that women score significantly higher than men on self-report measures of social anxiety (e.g., Banos, Botella, Quero, & Medina, 2007; Caballo *et al.*, 2008; Caballo, Salazar, Iruiria, Arias, &

Nobre, 2013; Hirai, Vernon, Clum, & Skidmore, 2011), whereas others found that women score higher than men, at a non-significant level (e.g., Stewart & Mandrusiak, 2007); finally, some studies report that men show non-significant higher scores than women (Hirai M, Vernon LL, Clum GA, Skidmore ST. 2011; Lancu *et al.*, 2006).

In relation to this study, first year students with social anxiety will have a negative influence on the adjustment process on campus. Past studies above has shown that first year students are vulnerable to anxiety as they are in a transitional process of dependence on their parents or care-givers to taking responsibilities. Also, on getting into the higher institution they are faced with lots of new challenges like having to make new friends, adjusting to the academic environment and meeting the demands of the academic requirements and the struggle for self-identity. All these stated aroused anxiety in the minds of freshmen and inability to cope with the standards of the university can lead to failure to complete educational program or mal-adjustment. However, successful adjustment at school depends on exhibiting a range of social skills, being assertive, co-operation with others, initiating conversations, etc.

2:4 STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESIS

1. Male undergraduates will significantly report higher academic adjustment than female undergraduates.
2. First year undergraduates who score high in emotional regulation will significantly report high on academic adjustment than those who score low in emotional regulation.
3. First year undergraduates who score low in social anxiety will significantly report high in academic adjustment than those who score high in social anxiety.

2:5 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

GENDER DISPARITY: In this study, gender disparity also known as gender differences are differences in the mental functions and behaviors of the sexes, and are a result of the complex interplay of biological, developmental and cultural factors.

EMOTIONAL REGULATION: Refers to the capability to be clear to emotions, monitoring stay open to feelings, and to monitor and regulating ones and others emotions to promote the understanding of intellectual and personal growth. This was measured using the Personal-Emotional Adjustment subscale of the Students Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) developed by Baker and Siryk (1989). High score on the scale indicates higher emotional regulation while, low score on the scale indicates lower emotional regulation.

SOCIAL ANXIETY: This variable in this study is defined as the fear of interaction with other people that brings on self-consciousness, feelings of being judged or evaluated negatively by other people and as a result leads to avoidance, feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, embarrassment, humiliation and depression. This was measured using social anxiety scale developed by Caballo, Salazar, Irurtia, Arias, and CISO-A Research Team (2012). High score on the scale indicates higher level of social anxiety while, low score on the scale indicates low level of social anxiety.

ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT: Academic adjustment is how well students cope with the demands of education, such as motivation to complete their academic requirements, academic effort and satisfaction with their academic environment. This was measured using Academic Adjustment subscale of the Students Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) developed by

Baker and Siryk (1989). High score on the scale indicates higher level of academic adjustment, while low score on the scale indicates lower level of academic adjustment.

GENDER: This variable is defined in this study as the social construction of male and female identity.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

3:1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Ex-post-facto research design was used in the study. This research design was adopted because the events surveyed with the use of structured questionnaire had occurred before the research was conducted. Therefore, the structured questionnaire was only used to collect data on events which occurrences had taken place. The independent variables in this study were gender, emotional regulation and social anxiety. In addition, the socio-demographic variables were use as secondary variables. They includes: sex, age, religion, faculty and educational level. Age was measured in continuous form as reported and provided by the respondents; gender was dichotomized into male and female. Religion was measured through Christianity, Islam and other religion. Faculty was measured as follows: art, education, sciences, social-sciences, agriculture, engineering and management sciences. The dependent variable is academic adjustment.

3:2 RESEARCH SETTING

The research was conducted at Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The setting was chosen because the environment was conducive for such research and that the researcher could easily get in contact with the students.

3:3 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

A total of two hundred and ninety-seven (297) participants was sampled and used for the study. The population of the study consists of the first year students of Federal University Oye-Ekiti, whom were drawn from various departments in the University. The participants' age

ranged from 15 years to 26 years. The participants' age mean was 19.24 years with standard deviation of 1.99. Other demographics characteristics revealed that 163 (54.9%) were males and 134 (45.1%) were females. Two hundred and thirty four (78.8%) were Christians, 56 (18.9%) were Muslims and 7 (2.4%) indicated other religion. Forty six students (15.5%) were from Faculty of Arts, 30 (10.1%) were from Education, 34 (11.4%) were from Sciences, 99 (33.3%) were from Social Sciences, 17 (5.7%) were from Agriculture, 8 (2.7%) were from Engineering and 63 (21.2) were from Management Sciences.

3:4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The study used convenience sampling technique for selecting the students. The convenience sampling technique was considered suitable in this study because the researcher could not get in contact with all the students, therefore those the researcher approached and volunteered to participate in the study actually completed the questionnaires.

3:5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

A structured questionnaire form was used to gather relevant information from the participant to the study. Scales in the questionnaires were widely used and demonstrated sound psychometric properties. The questionnaire was divided into four (4) different sections namely: Section A, B, C and D. The sections measured the variables of concern as well as socio-demographic information of the participants in the study. These sections are described as follows:

SECTION A: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

This consists of the participant socio demographic variables such as sex, age, religion, faculty and educational level.

SECTION B: SOCIAL ANXIETY

This was measured using social anxiety scale developed by Caballo, Salazar, Iurrtia, Arias, and CISO-A Research Team (2012). The scale consists of 30 items. The response format is in 5 point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The Respondents were asked to tick items that represent their interest in the questionnaire. High score on the scale indicates higher level of social anxiety. The social anxiety scale presented high ratings in reliability areas; internal consistency ranging from .86 to .92. The scoring format for this study, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1, Disagree (D) = 2, Undecided (U) = 3, Agree (A) = 4 and Strongly Agree (SA) = 5. In this study, the alpha co-efficient is .86.

SECTION C: EMOTIONAL REGULATION

This was measured using the Personal-Emotional Adjustment subscale of the Students Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) developed by Baker and Siryk (1989). The scale consists of 15 items. The response format is in 5 point Likert scale ranging from (0) always to (4) never. Respondents were asked to tick items that represent their interest in the questionnaire. High score on the scale indicates higher emotional regulation. The emotional regulation scale presented high ratings in reliability areas; internal consistency ranging from .85 to .91. The scoring format for this study, Always = 0, Usually = 1, Sometimes = 2, Rarely = 3 and Never = 4. The alpha co-efficient for this study is .54

SECTION D: ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT

This was measured using Academic Adjustment subscale of the Students Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) developed by Baker and Siryk (1989). The scale consists of 24 items. The response format is in 5 point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Respondents were asked to tick items that represent their interest in the questionnaire. High score on the scale indicates higher level of academic adjustment, while low score on the scale indicates lower level of academic adjustment. The academic adjustment scale presented high ratings in reliability areas; internal consistency ranging from .81 to .90. The scoring format for this study, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1, Disagree (D) = 2, Undecided (U) = 3, Agree (A) = 4 and Strongly Agree (SA) = 5. The alpha co-efficient for this study is .76

3:6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Questionnaires were used to collect data from the participants in the study. The selection of participants was done among first year undergraduate students of Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. Respondents were made to understand that participation will enable to address a very important issue and as well assure them that their responses will be confidential. The questionnaire was distributed to the participants and they were guided on how to respond to the questionnaires. The researcher assured them that their responses to the items in the questionnaire would not be disclosed or personally identified. The students that were willing to participate were given the questionnaires and they were encouraged to fill them as soon as possible. A total of three hundred and fifty (350) questionnaires were distributed and two hundred and ninety-seven (297) that were properly completed were used for data analysis.

3:7 STATISTICAL METHODS

The data collected from the participants were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The socio-demographic information of the participants was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage, standard deviation, and frequency distribution. The three hypotheses stated in the study were tested with t-test for independent samples in order to compare means differences.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Hypothesis One:

Hypothesis one stated that male first year undergraduates would significantly report higher academic adjustment than female first year undergraduates. The hypothesis was tested using t-test for independent samples. The result is presented below in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: t-test summary showing influence of gender on academic adjustment among first year undergraduates

	Sex	N	Mean	Std	df	t	P
Academic Adjustment	Male	163	81.55	12.10	295	2.60	<.05
	Female	134	78.02	11.03			

From Table 4.1, the result of the t-test showed that first year male undergraduates reported higher academic adjustment ($M = 81.55$, $SD = 12.10$) than female first year undergraduates ($M = 78.02$, $SD = 11.03$), $t = 2.60$, $df = 295$, $P = .000$. The result showed gender disparity in academic adjustment of first year undergraduates. Therefore, hypothesis one was accepted.

Hypothesis Two:

Hypothesis two stated that first year undergraduates who scored high in emotional regulation would significantly report high in academic adjustment than those who scored low in

emotional regulation. The hypothesis was tested using t-test for independent samples. The result is presented below in Table 4.2

Table 4.2: t-test summary showing influence of emotional regulation on academic adjustment among first year undergraduates

	Emotional regulation	N	Mean	Std	Df	t	P
Academic Adjustment	High	156	79.90	11.07	295	-0.08	>.05
	Low	141	80.01	12.49			

From Table 4.2, the result of the t-test showed that students who reported higher emotional regulation ($M = 79.90$, $SD = 11.07$) were not significantly different in academic adjustment from those who were low in emotional regulation ($M = 80.01$, $SD = 12.49$), $t = -0.08$, $df = 295$, $p = .085$). Therefore, hypothesis two was rejected.

Hypothesis Three:

Hypothesis three stated that first year undergraduate students who were low in social anxiety would significantly report higher academic adjustment than those who scored high on social anxiety. The hypothesis was tested using t-test for independent samples. The result is presented below in Table 4.3

Table 4.3: t-test summary showing influence of social anxiety on academic adjustment among first year undergraduates

	Social Anxiety	N	Mean	Std	Df	t	P
Academic Adjustment	High	159	75.13	8.74	295	-8.46	<.05
	Low	138	85.51	12.32			

From Table 4.3, the result of the t-test showed that students who scored low in social anxiety ($M = 85.51, SD = 12.32$) significantly reported higher academic adjustment than those who scored high in social anxiety ($M = 75.13, SD = 8.74$), $t = -8.46, df = 295, p = .328$. Therefore, hypothesis was accepted.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter contains the discussion, conclusion and recommendation based on the entire study. It sheds more light on the statistical results and findings in the previous chapter so as to make useful inferences, deductions and generalizations for applicability in the society. Furthermore, it highlights the limitations as well as other directions for future research in this area of study.

5.1 DISCUSSION

The study examined influence of gender, emotional regulation and social anxiety on academic adjustment among first year undergraduate students of Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti state, Nigeria. Three hypotheses were stated and tested using appropriate statistical analytical tool. The results indicated that two hypotheses were accepted, while one was rejected. The findings of this research are hereby discussed as follows: The first hypothesis which predicted that male undergraduates would significantly report higher academic adjustment than female undergraduates was accepted. Results reflect that first year male undergraduates who were low on academic adjustment did report higher academic adjustment than first year female undergraduates. This implies that first year male undergraduates adjust better academically than their female counterparts.

Another reason is that first year female undergraduates are more prone to experience loneliness and social isolation than their male counterparts and are less likely to hold leadership

roles than males. Therefore, this finding agrees with previous researches of this nature that have provided evidence that there is a link between gender and student academic adjustment; though with mixed reports. For example, a study has shown that female outshine their male peers in higher education (Lawrence, Ashford & Dent, 2006). Other studies mainly conducted out of the United States of America showed that females can perform at levels equal to males (Mayo & Christenfeld, 1999), Naderi, Abdullah, Aizan, Sharir & Kumar, 2009; Nori, 2002; Soares, Guisande, Almeida, & Paramo, 2009). First year male undergraduates reported higher academic adjustment than first year female undergraduates in this study because male participants were more than the female participants. Another reason is that first year female undergraduates are more prone to experience loneliness and social isolation than their male counterparts and are less likely to hold leadership roles than males. Males, due to their gender role enables them to adapt to the environment they find themselves in and are more likely to involve in various activities or political organizations on campus.

The second hypothesis which predicted that first year undergraduates who scored high in emotional regulation would significantly report higher in academic adjustment than those who scored low in emotional regulation was rejected. Result showed that first year undergraduates who reported higher emotional regulation were not different in academic adjustment scores compared to first year undergraduates who reported lower emotional regulation. The level of differences was not significant. Thus, this implies that emotional regulation did not influence the academic adjustment of first year undergraduate students. Therefore, this finding disagrees with previous researches of this nature (Eschenbeck *et al.*, 2007). Abdullah *et al.* (2004) established a strong correlation between student's level of emotional stability and academic adjustment among freshmen. Emotional regulation did not influence academic adjustment among the first year

students in this study because the mean scores and standard deviation of those who reported high emotional regulation were lower than the scores of those who reported low emotional regulation. Another reason is as a result of the university rules and regulations which must be strictly adhered to, so as to be able adjust academically irrespective of students who are high or low on emotional regulation.

The third hypothesis which predicted that first year undergraduates who scored low in social anxiety would significantly report higher academic adjustment than those who scored high in social anxiety was accepted. Results indicated that first year undergraduate students who reported low social anxiety had higher academic adjustment than those who were high in social anxiety. The level of difference was significant. Therefore, this implies that social anxiety had an influence on the academic adjustment of first year undergraduate students. Thus, this finding agrees with previous researches of this nature. Most of first year undergraduate students have symptoms of anxiety that affect their academic adjustment, which means they are vulnerable to these symptoms (Kneipp, Kelly, & Cyphers, 2009). Study had provided evidence that during their first year, they have a challenging transition period, because it is a period of adjustment from dependence in achieving their needs, demands of academic and social relations towards independence (Arjanggi, 2013).

Social anxiety influenced the academic adjustment of first year undergraduates in this study because most first year students have a transition period of adjustment from depending on their parents or care-givers to independent living on campus. Also, first year students are prone to social anxiety due to the fact that they are faced with different personal and interpersonal challenges which they are new to. These challenges include the ability to form new

relationships, to change existing relationships with parents and close relations and to develop learning habits for the new academic environment.

5:2 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn as a result of the findings of this study: It was observed that gender significantly influence the academic adjustment of first year undergraduate students sampled. This means that there is a difference between male and female undergraduates' ability to adjust academically. In addition, the results also reveals that emotional regulation did not significantly determine the academic adjustment of first year undergraduates sampled of which the researcher can infer that the emotional control efforts of undergraduates does not adequately determine their academic adjustment. Finally, social anxiety significantly influence the academic adjustment of first year undergraduate students sampled of which the researcher can conclude that social anxiety in first year students determines their level of adjustment. Therefore, the conclusion of the study from the above findings is that these three variables: gender disparity, emotional regulation and social anxiety influence academic adjustment among first year undergraduate students.

5:3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Implication of the findings of this research is very explicit. The basic implication of this study is that the academic adjustment of first year undergraduate students is influenced by the gender of the students, emotional regulation and level of social anxiety. This implies that gender

looking from the angle of the male has a greater influence on the academic adjustment of first year undergraduate students implying that male tends to adjust properly on entering the higher institution better than the females as past studies has given the reasons from gender roles that they have learnt from the society.

Emotional regulation does not look into gender disparity but looks at those who will adjust academically from high emotional regulation and those who will not adjust from low emotional regulation. However from the result of this study, the implication is that first year students would adjust academically irrespective of either they are high or low on emotional regulation. Social anxiety does not look at gender disparity but take a look at those who are high or low on social anxiety. This implies that first year undergraduate students who are low on social anxiety will adjust better academically in their academic sessions on campus than the first year students who are high on social anxiety will experience mal-adjustment and could lead to the inability to complete educational program and drop out. Also, it could end up in the extension of the required years stipulated for the program.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to effectively reduce the rate of mal-adjustment among university students, the following recommendations are suggested. The university should make policies that will enhance their well-being physically, academically, mentally. This will help the students to be able to face the society when they are out of the institution. This policy would prepare the students to be full-baked graduates and not half-baked graduates. Also, in the part of government and non-governmental organizations, should create an atmosphere where students can make their

complaints or where grievances can be tabled or channeled, if they are not satisfied with the way things are going on campus. So that they too would know that someone care about them when they complain and also that the society which they belong to is structured with laws and order that must be adhered to. The university management should utilize every opportunity to assist the first year students in all areas of adjustment which involves academic, social, emotional and institutional adjustment. Secondly, given every opportunity, counselors should find the means of tackling the common problems found among first year students such as mal-adjustment, fear of negative evaluation (social anxiety) and emotional instability.

Counselors should look into the causes of mal-adjustment and provide possible solutions. Parents should encourage their wards in exhibiting a range of social skills associated with cooperation, initiating conversations or assertions and self-control. Counselors should let parents, guardians and caregivers know that successful adjustment to school largely depends on past experiences at home and on the student skills and knowledge. In conclusion, problems with academic adjustment among students should be given serious concern, as difficulties in student's adjustment can lead to student's failure to complete educational program and drop out.

5:5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Some of the problems the researcher encountered during the course of the study which serve as the limitations include the following: The study sample technique used was accidental sampling could pose as a limitation because the researcher could not get in contact with all the students, therefore those she approached and who volunteered to participate in the study actually completed the questionnaire. Limited time was used for the study. Greater time will be needed

for better research. Also, some students found the instruments a bit difficult to comprehend; however, efforts were made by the researcher to explain some of the items so that they would understand. The budget at the disposal of the researcher placed a constraint in the scope covered for the study. The study would be better enhanced in its validity if wider geographical and cultural variations were examined.

5:6 SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE STUDIES

It is strongly suggested that the studies of this nature or similar to it, should be conducted in other higher institutions, cities or geographical zones in Nigeria and in abroad. Studies of this kind should also be conducted among first year students in other higher institutions such as polytechnics, college of education, etc. so as to have first-hand information about likely problems such as mal-adjustment, social anxiety and emotional instability among the freshmen. Finally, this research work will be of great importance to individuals, institutions, teachers, counselors, psychologists and also to other researchers who may deem it useful and use it as a reference material. Research institute can use this work as a basis for further research.

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**APPENDIX
(QUESTIONNAIRE)**

**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OYE-EKITI
[100 LEVEL STUDENTS ONLY]**

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire was designed to seek information for research purposes. Your name is not required, rather your honest and open response are needed. There is no right or wrong answer. All information given is assured utmost confidentiality and will be used only for the research purposes.

SECTION A

Demography Information

Sex: Male [] Female []

Age:.....

Religion: Christianity [] Islam [] Other Religion []

Faculty: Art [] Education [] Sciences [] Social Sciences [] Agriculture []
Engineering [] Management Sciences []

SECTION B: Instruction: Below are a series of social situations that may or may not cause you UNEASE, STRESS or NERVOUSNESS. Please tick each of the statements that best reflect your reaction to the social situations within the range of **strongly Disagree (SD)**, **Disagree (D)**, **Undecided (U)**, **Agree (A)**, **strongly Agree (SA)**.

S/N	ITEMS	SD	D	U	A	SA
1.	Greeting someone and being ignored					
2.	Having to ask a neighbour to stop making noise					
3.	Speaking in public					
4.	Asking someone attractive of the opposite sex for a date					
5.	Complaining to the waiter about my food					
6.	Feeling watched by people of the opposite sex					
7.	Participating in a meeting with people in authority					
8.	Talking to someone who isn't paying attention to what I am saying					
9.	Refusing when asked to do something I don't like doing					
10.	Making new friends					
11.	Telling someone that they have hurt my feelings					
12.	Having to speak in class, at work, or in a meeting					
13.	Maintaining a conversation with someone I've just met					
14.	Expressing my annoyance to someone that is picking on me					
15.	Greeting each person at a social meeting when I don't know most of them					
16.	Being teased in public					

17.	Talking to people I don't know at a party or a meeting					
18.	Being asked a question in class by the teacher or by a superior in a meeting					
19.	Looking into the eyes of someone I have just met while we are talking					
20.	Being asked out by a person I am attracted to					
21.	Making a mistake in front of other people					
22.	Attending a social event where I know only one person					
23.	Starting a conversation with someone of the opposite sex that I like					
24.	Being reprimanded (i.e. corrected) about something I have done wrong					
25.	While having dinner with colleagues, classmates or workmates, being asked to speak on behalf of the entire group					
26.	Telling someone that their behaviour bothers me and asking them to stop					
27.	Asking someone I find attractive to dance					
28.	Being criticized					
29.	Talking to a superior or a person in authority					
30.	Telling someone I am attracted to that I would like to get to know them better					

SECTION C: Please respond to the following statements regarding the way you express yourself by ticking the number from 0 to 4 as each applies to you as follows: **Always = 0, Usually = 1, Sometimes = 2, Rarely = 3, Never = 4.**

S/N	ITEMS	0	1	2	3	4
1.	I feel tense or nervous.					
2.	I feel blue (i.e. sad) and moody.					
3.	Being independent has not been easy for me.					
4.	I am not able to control emotions well lately.					
5.	I have thought about seeking psychological help recently.					
6.	I get angry too easily lately.					
7.	Sometimes thinking gets muddled too easily.					
8.	I worry a lot about university expenses.					
9.	I have trouble coping with university stress.					
10.	I feel tired a lot lately.					
11.	My appetite is good.					
12.	I have a lot of headaches.					
13.	I gained or lost a lot of weight lately.					
14.	I am not sleeping well.					
15.	I feel in good health.					

SECTION D: The following statements are about how people might think, feel, or behave. You are asked to indicate the extent to which each statement pertains to you personally using the scale below to indicate your level of agreement to disagree to each of the statement: **Strongly Disagree = SD, Disagree = D, Undecided = U, Agree = A, Strongly Agree = SA**

S/N	ITEMS	SD	D	U	A	SA
1.	I am definite (i.e. sure) about reasons for being in University					
2.	I have well-defined academic goals.					
3.	I consider university degree important.					
4.	I doubt value of university degree.					
5.	I enjoy academic work.					
6.	Most of my interests are not related to course work.					
7.	I keep up-to-date with academic work.					
8.	I do not work as hard as I should.					
9.	I am not motivated (i.e. encouraged) to study.					
10.	I attend classes regularly.					
11.	I find academic work difficult.					
12.	I do not function well during tests and exams.					
13.	I am satisfied with my academic performance.					
14.	I do not feel smart enough for course work.					
15.	I do not use my study time efficiently.					
16.	I enjoy writing papers for courses.					
17.	I have trouble concentrating when studying.					
18.	I do not do well academically, considering my efforts.					
19.	I have trouble getting started on homework and assignments.					
20.	I am satisfied with variety of courses in this university.					
21.	I am satisfied with quality of courses in this university.					
22.	I am satisfied with program of courses in this University.					
23.	I am satisfied with lecturers in this university.					
24.	I am satisfied with academic situation in this university.					

Thank you.