

Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Academic Adjustment of First-Year Management Undergraduates of State Universities in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of emotional intelligence on academic adjustment of first-year Management undergraduates of State Universities in Sri Lanka. To achieve this purpose, the researcher established three basic questions. Those are to explore the existing level of Emotional Intelligence on Academic Adjustment, relationships between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Adjustment, and the impact of Emotional Intelligence on Academic Adjustment of first-year Management undergraduates of State Universities in Sri Lanka. A structured questionnaire was used as the method of data collection and a sample of 347 first-year management undergraduates in state universities were selected using a stratified sampling method, through Morgan Table. The researcher considered three state universities in Western Province, Sri Lanka: University of Kalaniya, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, and University of Colombo. Quantitative research approach was used for this study. The data were analyzed using reliability analysis, validity analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis. The result indicated that Appraisal and Expression of Emotions, Regulation of Emotions, and Utilization of Emotion are in high level among selected respondents. Also, results indicated that emotional intelligence has a strong positive relationship with academic adjustment among first-year undergraduates of state universities in Western Province, Sri Lanka. Further, regression results reveal that Appraisal and Expression of Emotions (0.330), Regulation of Emotions (0.117), and Utilization of Emotion (0.146) significantly impact on Academic Adjustment among first-year management undergraduates of state universities in the western province, of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Academic Adjustment, Appraisal and Expression of Emotions, Regulation of Emotions, Utilization of Emotion, Emotional Intelligence*

Introduction

Almost every person has to face a life transition in their lifetime. Life transitions, including new experiences and changes, naturally create an adjustment process in individuals' lives. The transition from high school to university can be described as one of the major life transitions of young adults (Buote, 2006). Here, first-year college students face various stresses. Some of those are, forming new relationships (making new friends), changing existing relationships with parents and family (e.g. living apart) and learning study habits in a new study environment. In addition, they must learn to function as independent adults (e.g., budget time and money). Therefore, in this transition period, emerging adults have to create an adjustment process with significant challenges and stresses to meet the personal demands of the new educational and social environment (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Augell & Jay, 1991; Dyson & Renk, 2006; Erikson, 1968; Jackson, 2008; Lau, 2003; Tuna, 2003). Indeed, while many freshmen can cope with these transition challenges and successfully adjust to college life, some find it difficult to adapt and experience various adjustment problems (Bernier et al., 2005; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Kuh, 2005; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989; Upcraft et al., 2005) that caused them to drop out of college (Buote et al., 2007; Estrada et al., 2005; McGrath & Braunstein, 1997; Robbins et al., 1993).

Adolescents typically face many challenges during the transition to university, such as physical, social, academic, and emotional adjustment. To explain these challenges, the word 'adjustment' is defined as the process of accommodating demands and constraints, including the freedom to live and work with others by engaging in satisfying interactions and relationships (Akhtar & Alam, 2016). Similarly, Ramsay et al (2007) stated that it is a dynamic process that can lead to the right fit between an individual and their environment. According to related literature, university adjustment is viewed as a multifaceted and complex phenomenon (Baker & Siryk, 1984, 1986; Baker et al., 1985). Therefore, the university adjustment process can mainly identify four types of adjustment. They are academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal/emotional adjustment, and goal commitment/organizational commitment (Baker & Siryk, 1984). In short, academic adjustment refers to students' ability to achieve schoolwork and accept the academic environment; Social adjustment refers to the ability to deal effectively with a new, social environment, such as accepting positive friendships and joining social activities on university; Personal/emotional adjustment is

included in students' well-being; and organizational commitment refers to students' commitment to the university and satisfaction with attending a particular university (Baker & Siryk, 1986; Azniza et al., 2011).

In focusing on emotional intelligence, the theory of emotional intelligence proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1990, 1997) states that the ability to recognize, understand, use and manage emotions contributes to adaptability in various areas of life. To this end, Mikolajczak (2009) emotional intelligence is a person's ability to understand, identify, express and regulate the use of emotions in others. The topic of emotional intelligence is still a novelty and an expanding field of behavioural research that was recently developed with the support of prior studies related to the concept. Many studies revolving around adolescence further emphasize the ability to decode, understand and regulate emotions, interact with other people, and manage relationships related to social and academic adjustment (Sarni, 1999; Jensen et al., 2007; Low & Nelson, 2005; Goleman, 1998; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Chan, 2003; Vela, 2003). With college students, it is believed to be positively associated with the quality of social interactions (Lopes et al., 2004; Paulo et al., 2004). It has also been linked to positive mood and higher self-esteem (Schutte et al., 2002), social adjustment (Chan, 2003), and academic achievement (Abdallah et al., 2004). Emotional intelligence helps students succeed in their college education.

In deliberate on current studies, one area of research that has been investigated by scholars since the emergence of Covid-19 is the negative impact of "CoV19 fear" on all aspects of human life (Labrague and Santos, 2021; Mertens et al. 2020). There is evidence that people exposed to the risk of infection develop anxiety about transmission, worry about their health, and fear of infecting others (Ahorsu et al. 2020). In addition, fear of Covid 19 has triggered social exclusion and suicidal thoughts among individuals (Dsouza et al. 2020; Kahil et al. 2021). In studies of education, the adaptation of students to their complex environment is a useful concept (Adams and Proctor, 2010; Cappella et al. 2019). For example, student adjustment has a significant impact on the student's emotional, psychological and relational well-being (Longobardi et al. 2019) and overall academic success (Al-khatib et al., 2012). This is a problem that has affected the entire world. College administrators and the government are increasingly concerned about student retention in higher education. More than 40% of all college entrants leave high school without earning a degree, and 75% of these students drop out within the first 2 years of college. On average, an institution can expect that 56% of its entering class will not graduate (Tinto, 1987). Also, in the Netherlands, 33% of first-year university students do not make it to the second year of the program they originally started (Onderwijs, 2016). Likewise, research shows that the number of students seeking counselling for university

adjustment during the first period of university life in Turkey has the highest percentage among all problem areas (Doğan, 2012; Gizir, 2014). Each year, approximately 30% of first-year students at US baccalaureate institutions do not return for their second year, and educating these students' costs billions of dollars (Aulck et al., 2019). This problem can also be seen in Sri Lankan universities. That is, the number of students leaving as graduates are less than the number of students who enroll in an academic year (Sri Lanka University Statistics, 2020).

The level of academic adjustment to this new environment can be an effective measure for examining how well a student has transitioned to university (Rooij et al., 2018). For this reason, the purpose of the study is to foster emotional intelligence skills among first-year Management undergraduates in Sri Lankan state universities in Sri Lanka through the use of an emotional intelligence training program and examine how it affects students' academic adjustment. With this aim, this researcher expects to conduct this study through a deep quantitative method, focusing on selected state universities.

Literature Review

Since Darwin, the concept of adjustment has been widely used, but it is complex, difficult to define, and has a tendency to be used as an umbrella concept. The psychological process of adjusting to, coping with and managing the issues, challenges, and demands of everyday life are described as an adjustment by Simons et al. (1994, p. 8). It further emphasizes that students' success in the future will depend on how well they make adjustments to the university environment, which is a key factor in outcome prediction. Similarly, the term "adjustment" was used to describe a person's response to social, psychological, and physical requirements imposed on them by their environment (Aslan, 2018). University life adjustment is a multi-layered process (Schultz, 2008). A person's academic career, their ability to interact with their environment, and their level of life satisfaction are all impacted by adjustment (Aslan, 2018).

Academic adjustment refers to the procedures for managing these challenges and encompasses more than just a student's academic potential (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). The achievement of academic goals is crucially dependent on academic adjustment. Additionally, it describes a person's capacity to meet academic demands, be attentive,

participate in class activities, and develop into a learner with the capacity for independent learning. Further, academic adjustment includes important elements such as the motivation to learn, action to meet academic demands, clarity of academic purpose, and satisfaction with the academic environment (Baker & Siryk, 1984). Engagement in school and adjusting to academic life are crucial predictors of a college student's success. When students are actively engaged in class, they have an easier time adjusting to academic life. This also relates to social support, which is a crucial element of academic adjustment in higher education (Hays & Oxley, 1986).

According to Ramsay et al. (1999), academic adjustment is the accomplishment of the fit between the students and their academic environment. They must interact with new friends, teachers, and academic systems. Furthermore, the academic adjustment of college students with high levels of social support and self-esteem was better. Students who were more adjusted to college life academically would be more dedicated to their study's objective (Grant-Vallone, et.al. 2004). Lowe and Cook's (2003), stated that twenty to thirty per cent of college students had a difficult time adjusting to life in a higher education adjusting, which caused a significant number of them to drop out or underperform.

There are four different student functioning domains that make up academic adjustment (Baker & Siryk 1984a, b, 1986, 1989; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt 1994) as academic achievement, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment and institutional adjustment According to Mayer and Salovey (1990) and Ishaq (2020) Emotional intelligence is a set of skills and a type of social intelligence. The ability to recognize, differentiate and observe the careful assessment and expression of feeling in oneself and others, the effective regulation of emotion in oneself and others and the use of moods and knowledge to inspire, plan, guide, and achieve in one's life are all examples of emotional intelligence.

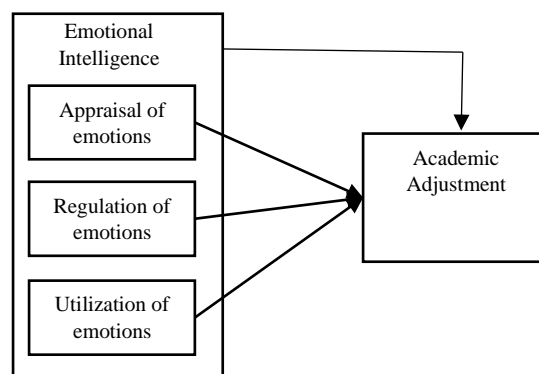
Study findings support Nelson and Low's (2003) model of the relationship between emotional intelligence and student retention by showing a positive correlation between student adjustment and emotional intelligence (Adeyemo, 2007; Yip & Martin, 2006). According to Nelson et al., (2005), emotional intelligence is an important predictor that helps students successfully maintain adjustment during their transition. Additionally, Austin et al. (2005) contends that because emotional intelligence integrates several skills related to this stage, early emotional intelligence programming is required for students in order to manage their transition. According to Uwem et al. (2021), there is a strong and positive correlation between academic adjustment and emotional intelligence.

In order to look into the connection between schoolchildren's emotional intelligence and their adjustment, Shakuntala and Santhoch (2013) conducted

a study on emotional intelligence and social adaptation among students in the district of Haryana. To specifically look into the connection between emotional intelligence and the adjustment of primary and secondary students, Adeyemo (2004) conducted a study on the buffering effect of emotional intelligence on the adjustment of secondary school students in transition in the city of Ibadan, Nigeria. As well as, Akinboye (2003) found a significant relationship between these secondary school students' emotional intelligence and adjustment as well as a significant relationship between emotional intelligence levels and adjustment. Emotional intelligence, according to Wood et al. (2004), was a significant predictor of academic adjustment. Moreover, first-year university students' social and academic adjustment was positively correlated with emotional intelligence. The social and academic adjustment of students in the school was significantly predicted by students' emotional intelligence.

Research Methodology

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



The conceptualization of the research in this study aims to determine how emotional intelligence affects academic adjustment. Appraisal, Regulation, and Utilization are three dimensions that can be considered to be emotional intelligence (figure 01) (Mayer & Salovey, 1995), and Academic Achievement, Social Adjustment, Personal Emotional Adjustment, and Institutional Adjustment, (Baker & Siryk 1984) four dimensions that have an impact on academic adjustment, have been identified for this purpose.

A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. Descriptive survey research is a scientific method that involves gathering data without altering the environment. It includes surveys and fact-finding investigations of

various kinds that aim to gather data that reveals existing phenomena.

Individuals were used as the analytical unit in this study. The empirical literature demonstrates a significant positive relationship between academic adjustment and emotional intelligence. Based on earlier literature, the following hypothesis is put forth.

H1: There is a significant impact of emotional intelligence on the academic adjustment of first-year management students in state universities in Sri Lanka.

Students' ability to accurately perceive emotions and understand the reasons for those emotions appeared to be the primary factor in how EI affected academic performance. With this knowledge, students with high EI may be able to lead more adaptive lives, be more aware of their own and other people's cues and understand the reasons behind their own and other people's emotions (Brackett & Salovey, 2006). According to Shenoy and Thingujam, 2012, there is a correlation of 0.33 between Emotional recognition and expression and academic adjustment. According to Uwem et al. (2021), the study revealed a significant relationship between students' self-awareness and academic adjustment. Hence, the second hypothesis can be developed as follows.

H2: There is a significant impact of appraisal and expression of emotion on the academic adjustment of first-year management students in state universities in Sri Lanka.

Emotional management and control is the component of emotional intelligence (EI) that is significantly correlated with each academic adjustment subscale at the subscale level. There is a positive correlation between emotional management and control or regulation of

emotion and academic adjustment (Shenoy & Thingujam, 2012). According to Uwem et al., 2021, there is a significant impact of self-regulation on academic adjustment. So, the next hypothesis can be developed as follows.

H3: There is a significant impact of regulation of emotion on the academic adjustment of first-year management students in state universities in Sri Lanka.

Shenoy and Thingujam (2012) found that there is a positive relationship between Understanding the emotions of external or Utilization of emotion and academic adjustment and there is a correlation of

H4: There is a significant impact of utilization of emotion on the academic adjustment of first-year management students in state universities in Sri Lanka.

The data used in this study were gathered by taking a cross-section of the population at one time, making it a cross-sectional study in terms of time.

For this study, the researcher selected three universities with management faculties that are prominent in the Western Province. The enrolled population for the first-year of 2019/2020 faculties of management studies in Western Province is 3080. This consisted of 1348, 716, and 1016 first-year students from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, the University of Colombo, and the University of Kelaniya respectively.

The sampling method used to choose university students is a stratified sampling technique to select a representative sample from the population. Content of the sample is shown in Table 01

Table 1: Sample Distribution

Universities	Population	Sample	Percentage
University of Colombo	716	80	23.24%
University of Sri Jayewardenepura	1348	150	43.76%
University of Kelaniya	1016	112	32.98%
Total	3080	342	100%

Source: Sri Lanka University Statistics, 2021

A standard questionnaire developed by Baker & Siryk's, (1989), Liran & Miller, (2017) was used to measure academic adjustments where a standard questionnaire developed by Schutt et al.,(1998) was used to measure emotional intelligence.

Analysis and Results

Demographics of Respondents

Referring to Table 2, it can be noticed that the majority of the respondents are female (70.3%).

Table 2: Analyzing Respondents based on Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	244	70.3
Male	103	29.7
Total	347	100.0

Source: Survey Data, 2023

According to the analysis result of this study (Table 3), the correlation coefficient (r) value was 0.708 between Appraisal and Expression of Emotions and Academic Adjustment among respondents. Moreover, all the value of the correlation coefficient falls under the coefficient range of 0.5-1.0. The p-

value is equal to 0.000 and less than the alpha value. It shows that there is a strong positive relationship between appraisal and expression of emotions and academic adjustment in first-year management students from selected three state universities in Western Province.

Table 3: Correlation Coefficients

		Academic Adjustment
Appraisal and Expression of Emotions	Pearson Correlation	.708
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000
Regulation of Emotions	Pearson Correlation	.654
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000
Utilization of Emotion	Pearson Correlation	.666
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Survey Data, 2023

Table 4: Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.726 ^a	0.527	0.526	0.15815

a. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Intelligence

Source: Survey Data, 2023

As per the table 4, the R square value is 0.526. The result indicates that Table 03, the “adjusted R square” 0.526 indicates that it is an adjustment of the R Square that penalizes the addition of extraneous predictors to the model.

Table 5: ANOVA of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	9.619	1	9.619	384.569	.000 ^b
Residual	8.629	345	.025		
Total	18.248	346			

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Adjustment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Intelligence

Source: Survey Data, 2023

According to the ANOVA Table 5, the regression model was significant (F=384.569, p=0.000). The proposed model was adequate as the F statistic was significant at 1% level.

Table 06: Coefficients of Regression Model

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	1.839	.134		13.720	.000
EI	.589	.030	.726	19.610	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Adjustment

Source: Survey Data, 2023

The results in above Table 6 indicates that, Emotional Intelligence ($p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.589$) significantly impact on Academic Adjustment.

The Researcher used multiple regression analysis to identify the impact of the independent variables on dependent variable.

Table 7: Model Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.729 ^a	0.532	0.528	0.15785

a. Predictors: (Constant), Appraisal and Expression of Emotions, Regulation of Emotions, and Utilization of Emotion

Source: Survey Data, 2023

The summary of multiple regression model shows that R square value is 0.532 showing the model adequacy. Table 6, the “adjusted R square” 0.528 indicates that it is an adjustment of the R Square that penalizes the addition of extraneous predictors to the model.

Table 8: ANOVA of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Residual	9.702	3	3.234	129.794	.000 ^b
Total	8.546	343	.025		
	18.248	346			

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Adjustment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Appraisal and Expression of Emotions, Regulation of Emotions, and Utilization of Emotion

Source: Survey Data, 2023

According to the ANOVA Table 8, the regression model was significant ($F = 129.794$, $p = 0.000$). The proposed model was adequate as the F statistic was significant as a 1% level.

The results in below Table 9 indicates that, Appraisal and Expression of Emotions ($p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.330$), Regulation of Emotions ($p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.117$), Utilization of Emotion ($p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.146$), significantly impact on Academic Adjustment. According to the coefficient result, the regression model can be expressed as follows.

Table 09 Coefficients of Regression Model

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	1.824	.134		13.597	.000
Appraisal & Expression of Emotions	.330	.056	.421	5.892	.000
Regulation of Emotions	.117	.051	.156	2.269	.024
Utilization of Emotions	.146	.052	.197	2.796	.005

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Adjustment

Source: Survey Data, 2023

Testing Hypothesis 1

H1: There is a significant impact of emotional intelligence on academic adjustment

According to Table 9, the Unstandardized Coefficient value shows the positive impact of emotional intelligence on academic adjustment. As the level of significance is less than the alpha value (in this case, 0.000), there is enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis. It can be concluded that there is enough evidence to say that, there is a positive impact of emotional intelligence on academic adjustment among first-year management students from selected three state universities in Western Province.

Testing Hypothesis II

H2: There is a significant impact of appraisal and expression of emotions on academic adjustment

According to Table 9, the Unstandardized Coefficient value shows the positive impact of appraisal and expression of emotions on academic adjustment. The level of significance is less than the alpha value (in this case, 0.000). It can be concluded that there is enough evidence to say that there is a positive impact of appraisal and expression of emotions on academic adjustment among first-year management students from selected three state universities in Western Province.

Testing Hypothesis III

H3: There is a significant impact of regulation of emotions on academic adjustment

According to Table 9, the Unstandardized Coefficient value shows the positive impact of regulation of emotions on academic adjustment. As the level of significance is less than the alpha value (in this case, 0.024). It can be concluded that there is enough evidence to say that there is a positive impact of regulation of emotions on academic adjustment among first-year management students from selected three state universities in Western Province.

Testing Hypothesis IV

H4: There is a significant impact of utilization of emotion on academic adjustment

According to Table 9, the Unstandardized Coefficient value shows the positive impact of utilization of emotion on academic adjustment. As the level of significance is less than the alpha value (in this case, 0.005). It can be concluded that there is enough evidence to say that there is a positive impact of utilization of emotion on academic adjustment among first-year management students from selected three state universities in Western Province.

Discussion

Emotional intelligence is an important aspect of determining academic adjustments and motivation. However, emotional intelligence plays a vital part in students' academic learning. Also, students with greater emotional intelligence are more self-confident in managing academic challenges. Therefore, emotional intelligence is considered a significant predictor of students' academic performance in higher education. As a result, this research study mainly focused on the impact of emotional intelligence on academic adjustment among first-year students of management in within selected three state universities in Western Province.

Here, the researcher collected data from 347 first-year students who are studying in selected three state universities, in Sri Lanka. Further, the researcher used various analysis techniques to achieve these primary objectives. Such as descriptive, correlation, and regression analysis. This study follows the deductive research approach to achieve its research objectives. As well as this research study focuses on positivism because, under positivism, theories provide the basis of explanation, permit the anticipation of phenomena,

predict their occurrence, and therefore allow them to control. The data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire developed from the standard measure which was validated by previous researchers and the measure. For this study data collected within a particular period. Therefore, this is a cross-sectional study.

There are a few recommendations that can be provided for the higher education sector for their future growth while overcoming more academic adjustments. Emotional intelligence is a predictor of academic adjustment of undergraduate students. Having this awareness helps the students comprehend their emotional states to build better relationships with others and support consistent improvement of their academic performance. Mentors, lecturers, senior batches, and unions could enhance emotions through appraisal and positive expressions. Also, they can train first-year students to control their negative abilities towards academic improvements. University management can advise the curriculum designers to develop a specific course focused

on the improvement of students' emotional intelligence especially within the first year. A few educational programs could be introduced to and designed to enhance emotional intelligence among students while promoting academic adjustment. The academic staff could encourage their students to study and maintain self-development books which help to boost their emotional strengths.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be mentioned that emotional intelligence has a significance impact on academic adjustment of the first-year management undergraduates of state universities of Sri Lanka. It can be concluded that students with higher level of emotional intelligence can adjust to the university life. For the future researchers, it can be recommended to select a large sample to further improve the generalizability and consider the other factors affecting academic adjustments.

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