

**PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AND ACADEMIC
ADJUSTMENT IN TECHNICAL COLLEGE
STUDENTS IN KUCHING, SARAWAK**

JENNIFER ANAK TINi

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JENNIFER ANAK TINI

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ABSTRACT

As college students are being in a period of transitioning from teenage years to adulthood, they typically will experience multiple levels of psychological distress, and these stressors influence their studies. This research presents to investigate the relationship between psychological distress and academic adjustment in technical college students in Kuching, Sarawak. This research used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey. The instruments in this study applied Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms-34 (CCAPS-34) for psychological distress domains and Academic Adjustment Scale (AAS) for academic adjustment domains. The students were given a web link to the survey questionnaire. The respondents in this research are 303 students of semester three; consist of 146 male students and 157 female students. Overall, there is a significant correlation between psychological distress and academic adjustment, and there is a significant difference between psychological distress and gender. Female students had a significantly higher mean score of psychological domains than males, although psychological distress such as general anxiety and hostility occurred in the same manner. Besides, psychological distress domains have affected students' academic adjustment in their college years as the significant (2-tailed) values showed a statistically significant correlation between these variables. For these reasons, both null hypotheses are rejected. With this, psychological distress is unexceptional towards tertiary education learners and has a negative impact on an individual and their educational setting. In order to improve learners' academic performance, it is crucial to have more focus on the psychological wellbeing of college students.

Keywords: Psychological distress, academic adjustment, technical college

TEKANAN PSIKOLOGI DAN PENYESUAIAN AKADEMIK DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR–PELAJAR KOLEJ TEKNIKAL DI KUCHING, SARAWAK

JENNIFER ANAK TINI

ABSTRAK

Pelajar–pelajar kolej yang sedang dalam peralihan dari usia remaja ke dewasa, biasanya mereka akan mengalami pelbagai tahap tekanan psikologi, dan tekanan ini mempengaruhi pembelajaran mereka. Penyelidikan ini dibuat untuk mengkaji hubungan antara tekanan psikologi dan penyesuaian akademik di kalangan pelajar – pelajar kolej teknikal di Kuching, Sarawak. Penyelidikan ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan menggunakan kajian keratan rentas. Instrumen dalam kajian ini menggunakan *Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms-34* (CCAPS-34) untuk domain tekanan psikologi dan *Academic Adjustment Scale* (AAS) untuk domain penyesuaian akademik. Para pelajar diberikan pautan laman web untuk tujuan soal selidik tinjauan. Terdapat 303 responden pelajar semester tiga di dalam kajian ini; terdiri daripada 146 orang pelajar lelaki dan 157 orang pelajar perempuan. Secara keseluruhan, tekanan psikologi dan penyesuaian akademik didapati mempunyai hubungan signifikan di antara satu sama lain, dan terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan antara tekanan psikologi dan jantina. Pelajar perempuan mempunyai skor min domain psikologi yang tertinggi daripada lelaki, walaupun tekanan psikologi seperti kegelisahan secara amnya dan amarah berlaku dengan kadar yang sama. Selain itu, domain tekanan psikologi telah mempengaruhi penyesuaian akademik pelajar semasa keberadaan di kolej kerana nilai signifikan (2-tailed) menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan statistik antara kedua – dua pemboleh ubah ini. Atas sebab-sebab ini, kedua-dua hipotesis null ditolak. Oleh itu, tekanan psikologi adalah sesuatu terlampau biasa berlaku terhadap pelajar di institusi tinggi dan ia memberi kesan negatif kepada individu dan persekitaran pendidikan mereka. Untuk meningkatkan prestasi akademik pelajar, fokus haruslah lebih diberikan kepada kesejahteraan psikologi pelajar.

Kata Kunci: Tekanan psikologi, penyesuaian akademik, kolej teknikal

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LIST ABBREVIATIONS

MCO	Movement Control Order
SOP	Standard Operation Procedure
MOE	Ministry of Education
CCAPS - 34	Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms-34
CCAPS-62	Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms-62
AAS	Academic Adjustment Scale
AAS-M	Academic Adjustment Scale-Motivation
AAS-L	Academic Adjustment Scale-Lifestyle
AAS-A	Academic Adjustment Scale-Academic
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
PKS	Politeknik Kuching Sarawak
APACC	Asia Pacific Accreditation and Certification Commission
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
F	Frequency
P	Percentage
M.S.	Mean Score
S.D	Standard Deviation
B.A	Below Average
A.A	Above Average
DPS	Depression
GAX	General Anxiety
SCA	Social Anxiety
ETD	Eating Disorders
HST	Hostility
ALC	Alcohol Use
LFS	Academic Lifestyle
ACH	Academic Achievement
MOT	Academic Motivation

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

All over the world, students are liable to suffer from psychological distress. There are several symptoms of psychological distress, including anxiety, desolation, depression, misery, and antisocial. According to Kerr (2020), 75% of adults' experience mental illness before age 25, and this mental health condition is just the norm among college students. In recent times, as the pandemic disease of COVID- 19 hit the world so hard that the ministry decided to make the tough decision faster by closing educational institutions and one of the affected is the tertiary education sector.

Relative to report by Murniati (2020), compliance with the obligation of movement control order (MCO) standard operation procedure (SOP), students have to stay put within the campus or nearby area to limit the spreading numbers by the disease. She further elaborated that universities and colleges offered e-counseling services to cater to students' emotional, mental, and psychological needs. In this time of crisis, students favourably incline towards feeling anxious, distress, isolation, extreme boredom, concern, or unsettling emotion.

This action is in line with Malaysian education policy in which stated in Executive Summary Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (Preschool to Post-Secondary Education) (2015) that as part of the objective to complement a balanced education to students, the ministry also looks into an individual's emotional, spiritual and physical development. Each student is outstanding, and therefore psychological support is essential to succeed in dealing with challenges in their life.

1.1.1 Malaysia's education policy

In Malaysia, education begins from preschool-aged about 4 to 6 years, at primary school age of 7 to 12 years old, at secondary school age of 13 to 17 years old, and to higher education level. According to Executive Summary Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 - 2025 (Preschool to Post-Secondary Education) (2015), it is clearly understood that The National Education Philosophy demands a holistic development for all children, particularly in the area of intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical. With our education views as a whole, integration of these four aspects believes in producing a knowledgeable, efficient, and capable individual. Furthermore, this personality creates high moral standards. It leads to personal health at high rates. As a result, it helps bring peace to the nation and enhance the high values of the individual, family, community, and undoubtedly.

Corresponding to the countries envisions of holistic education, to build high moral standards and high levels of personal well-being, different parties ought to take a different role in shaping and producing desired results in students. For instance, Clark, Amar-Singh, and Lina (2014) posited that children at the age of 12 to 14 experiences transition from childhood to adulthood encounter a series of significant physical, psychological and social changes in their life. Therefore, these changes influence the process of understanding their psychological changes in terms of emotion, behaviour, and identity. The article further affirmed that parenting skills, their friends, the school, the society, and perhaps cultural and historical background also affect building up abilities and capabilities of a child.

Moreover, to deal with psychological changes among children, the Ministry of Education decided to recruit more school counsellors to corroborate students' needs and to make sure they receive adequate attention (Executive Summary Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025 (Preschool to Post-Secondary Education), 2015). As expressed by Irwan (2018) in his article, most of the appointed counselling teachers are qualified in addressing specific issues and in unexpected circumstances that in line with the ministry's policies.

Over the years, Selvaraj, Anbalagan, and Azlin (2014) stated that the government through the Ministry of Education (MOE) insistent the tertiary education system on being one of the world's educational hubs and thus provides a quality and efficient education to all students. This process is in the sequel made by the government in Malaysian education blueprint to provide a holistic education for all from the preschool stage to the higher institution. However, as students are in a period of transitioning from adolescence to adult, they typically undergo multiple sources and levels of pressure throughout their learning (Ali & Ghasak, 2017). In particular, this will affect them in terms of their studies, behaviour, mental, physical, and health in general. Consequently, the psychological support system has been part of an education program to carter and assist students throughout their learning to manage their well-being consistently, especially when they further study in higher education institutions.

1.1.2 Malaysia's education issues

Nor Ain (2019) asserted that although National Education Philosophy desires to produce a well of human product intellectually, spiritually, physically, and emotionally, the country still focuses too much on academics, which is the intellectual area and less of the three aspects. Admittedly, Rayyan (2020) regarded that academic performance is still the area that treated as more important than the other aspects of students' schooling years in Malaysia. In short, students face more challenges to achieve and aim higher, giving rise to mental health issues, pressure, and struggle to cope with a daily basis. For instance, some parents persuade their children on getting flying colors in academics and perform tremendously to get a better place in college or university and later in their future career. Rayyan furthered review that the requirements made by the parents, teachers, or school might cause critical issues on students' mental health, and it is a natural way to create stress and depressing situations. As voiced out by Rosemarie (2020), the education system promotes and encourages the learning environment to be the fear of failure, fear of humiliation, and fear of disapproval, hence ruin the learners emotionally and spiritually.

Subsequently, educators too are being the primary cause of learners' learning development and so able to be credited for it. Wan Norliza (2017) disclosed that teachers and lecturers are accountable for students' learning process and in building

cognitive measures, emotional and spiritual intelligence. Students should expose to soft skills, hands-on or discovery learning in their school years, so students become capable, creative, and adapt to their environment naturally. Nor Ain (2019) also expressed that educators need to understand and use the right technique in teaching in order learners enjoy, boost interest in their studies, and to build up real characters. Nonetheless, Rosemarie (2020) indicated that the origin tasks of educating students to replace by the additional clerical works that teachers need to deal with in their careers. As a result, the ability to perform well in teaching and learning gets affected and limited teachers' capability in doing well.

Apart from this, Tan (2019) quoted that professional educators and academics should solely manage the education system without the interfering of politics except only at the setting of objectives in a transparent manner. Moaz (2019) uttered that politics intervene the education rights from the primary to higher institutions by injecting personal ideas and knowledge rather than looking into building up the real character of a child. For this reason, the government should facilitate necessary changes made in the education system to be convenient and acceptable to teachers' ability and capability of teaching and learners' psychological development in learning. Selvaraj, Anbalagan, and Azlin (2014) revealed that effective teaching, learning needs an effective delivery system, and that cultivates students' learning behaviour and promotes meaningful results which in line with the education blueprint.

1.1.3 Psychological distress

Dian et al. (2018) revealed that stress, depression, and anxiety associated with one another among university students, as they believe to be capable of self-supporting and dealing with new responsibilities. As asserted by Thompson, Pa Her, Fetter, and Perez-Chavez (2019), it is not surprising that many college students experience low psychological well-being, as they need to handle development tasks such as academics, social relationships, and personal needs. Furthermore, Ali and Ghasak (2017) stated that the rate of psychological distress is slightly higher among female undergraduate students in Malaysia. They believed that female and male psychological well-being is unlikely the same. However, Thompson et al. (2019) elaborated that regardless of gender concern, poor psychological behaviours in college students give negative

implications for their educational pathway and career development in the future. In brief, when students shift from adolescence to adulthood, they should control their life and be part of that role-play. For instance, decision making of their future career and fulfil the demand of their academic life.

This research project focuses mainly on psychological distress and academic adjustment in technical college students. This study is adapting psychometric properties from the Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms-34 (CCAPS-34) from Hall (2012). CCAPS designed to measure the psychological traits among college students, whereby the items asked concerning their student's life. CCAPS-34 consists of seven subscales: depression, generalized anxiety, social anxiety, eating concerns, academic distress, hostility, and alcohol use. These seven subscales comprise 34 items in which they related to psychological symptoms that appear mainly among college students. CCAPS-34 is a brief psychological assessment, standardized, well organized, and psychometrically instrument in assessing a range of mental health symptoms explicitly tailored to the needs of college students (Locke et al., 2012).

1.1.4 Academic adjustment

Thompson et al. (2019) emphasized that psychological distress additionally put negative implications for academic performance, academic achievement, and college dropout rates among students. Other reasons contribute to early dropout from college perhaps students have an inferior relationship with their peers, teachers, and school management, and feel hostility toward school and subjects (Alipio, 2020). An article released by Lee (2020) regarding the Covid-19 pandemic effects on students in Hong Kong, the authorities' decision on delay the university entrance exam has made the students stress levels up, and they were too anxious about the uncertainty circumstances. Consequently, this is another example of how students require adapting and changing according to the current situation in their studies. In other words, rather than focusing on academic achievement in college years, contentment in personal lifestyle, the anticipation of achieving the desired goal, and enthusiasm as a student are part of the features that fall into the concept of academic adjustment (Anderson, Guan, & Koc, 2016).

Dian et al. (2018) explained that academic performance has a connection to depression. As the students are not having vast experience in college life, such as new relationships, new surroundings, and completing the new tasks, they might find it hard to adjusting the situation themselves. Besides, Anderson et al. (2016) designed the academic adjustment scale (AAS) to students who move and experience a new culture and environment for tertiary education. AAS found to be more applicable to students who have gone through few semesters in their college year as they already attuned to their learning environment. AAS covers three sub-dimensions: academic lifestyle (AAS-L), academic achievement (AAS-A), and academic motivation (AAS-M). Each psychometric property is composed of three items. Achmad and Nur (2018) affirmed that students to adapt themselves to deal with their studies, emotional reaction, and interpersonal skills, and AAS cover how the students face and react to their new environment, academic attainment, and the desire to go further in the future.

1.2 Problem statement

Psychological distress could have detected as early as in the adolescent stage, whereby before the transition period to adulthood phase. Grasdalmoen, Eriksen, Lønning, and Siverten (2020) propounded that most mental disorders take place in late adolescence and early adulthood, and some researchers found that 12 to 50 per cent of college students possess the traits. According to the article written by Lee, Sandhya, and Rajaenram (2018), 18.3 per cent of students in Malaysia are suffering from depression, 39.7 per cent experienced anxiety, while stress is 9.6 per cent. The increasing numbers of mental health issues among students at the age of 13 to 17 represent the potential problems to the schools and specifically to the country.

On the other hand, Rozana (2018) revealed that the analysis carried among university students in Klang Valley between the age of 18 to 24 on depression, anxiety, and stress were significantly higher and alarming. Altogether, they displayed of depression 37.2 per cent, anxiety scored 63 per cent, and stress rated 23.7 per cent. Previous research indicated that depression phenomena among colleges and university students aged 18–25 years old were from 12.3 per cent to 21.3 per cent (Latifah, Normala, & Esra, 2016). Their research also showed that uncertainty, depression, melancholy, or pressure over demanding circumstances occurred among this population.

Dian et al. (2018) verified that the associated factors of psychological distress among higher institutions students were closely related to academic, non-academic, parents, and cultural background, while academic achievement solely found closely connected to depression. Therefore, psychological distress creates a decrease in results, compromises the well-being of students and triggers mental and physical health issues. Students face a lack of self-confidence, emotional dysregulation, suicidal, and detrimental self-interest.

The suspension of classes and evacuation students by universities due to the recent Covid-19 outbreak has led to negative psychological consequences among college students (Zhai & Xue, 2020). Students dealt with extreme distress, and their academic routine changed overnight. Practically, the learning process throughout the semester program abruptly interrupted, and students develop poor psychological behaviour due to this pandemic. Conrad, Rayala, Menon, and Vora (2020) mentioned that during the lockdown period, when college activities become heavily restricted, and students require quarantining themselves, they are prone to perpetuate stress, anxiety, and low mood. They added that this vulnerable population could lead to clinically significant psychiatric symptoms and illness. As endorsed by Kerr (2020), the rate of depression, PTSD, and eating disorders in college students has been considerably higher over time, and the full impact of a new set of stressors due to the virus has not known yet.

It is necessary to address and ascertain the level of psychological distress in college students and the insight of this condition to academic adjustment, especially in technical college students in Sarawak. Thus, not many studies conducted the effect of psychological distress on academic adjustment in technical college students in Sarawak. Rozana (2018) emphasized that psychological symptoms may intervene in students' academic performance, and this distraction causes them to struggle more in the years in university.

Malarvili and Saroja (2018) uncovered that research among university and college students on distress symptoms documented well in many Western countries even though studies agreed that these groups of students share common characteristics of distress around the globe. Therefore, there is a need to carry out this study of psychological distress on academic adjustment among the students in Sarawak, Malaysia.

1.3 Research objectives

This research is to provide elements and aspects of psychological distress that could take place in students as they are going through their terms of studying in college. It is also to understand that these psychological symptoms might affect students' academic performance as in lifestyle, attainment, and motivation to study. In particular, the followings are sub-objectives for this study:

1. To identify the level of psychological distress among the students.
2. To identify academic adjustment among the students.
3. To determine the normality of the data distribution by gender.
4. To investigate whether there is a significant difference between psychological distress and gender.
5. To investigate whether there is a significant correlation between psychological distress and academic adjustment.

1.4 Research questions

In order to have a better comprehension of the study, the following are queries to establish information and bring into attention the relationship on research objectives:

1. What is the level of psychological distress among the students?
2. What is the academic adjustment among the students?
3. What is the normality of the data distribution by gender?
4. Is there a significant difference between psychological distress and gender?
5. Is there a significant correlation between psychological distress and academic adjustment?

1.5 Research hypotheses

This research focuses on the impact of psychological distress on gender, the dissimilar result of psychological distress on male and female students. The following hypotheses are identified based on the objectives of the study above:

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between psychological distress and gender.

Ha₁: There is a significant difference between psychological distress and gender.

Ho₂: There is no significant correlation between psychological distress and academic adjustment.

Ha₂: There is a significant correlation between psychological distress and academic adjustment.

1.6 Significance of the study

The study of psychological distress and academic adjustment in technical college students will redound to the following:

The School

Data given will provide the school management with information on how the psychological distress in students affect their academic adjustment in terms of their lifestyle, performance, and motivation in learning. Through the results, the school management will take further measurements to help and improve individual well-being. The school management could initiate collaboration among school counsellors and educators to design a support system for students to guide and support them throughout their learning.

Counselling Centre

The results of this research will help the counsellors to understand and evaluate the psychological symptoms among students under a particular set of conditions. The data will help counsellors to develop strategies for potential problems students to approach a

better understanding in coping with psychological distress and academic adjustment in the future.

Students

This study will provide a better understanding of psychological symptoms and the effects of it on their academic adjustment. This data will give students the need to perceive the significance nature of psychological distress in their learning process and capable of possessing the ability to improve their well-being as a whole.

The society

The data will help the community to grasp a better understanding of the possibilities of increasing numbers of students who encounter psychological symptoms, and this affects the students' academic adjustment. This study will enhance knowledge of psychological distress among students and prepare society to explore the possibilities to help the students.

1.7 Research limitation

This study established based on the quantitative approach whereby a set of a questionnaire on psychological distress and academic adjustment distribute to technical college students in their semester three. This quantitative approach provides information about the domains associated with psychological distress and academic adjustment. Respondents should be in their semester three program as they experience the transition of college life and randomly select among the community and volunteer to take part in the research.

To address the issues regarding psychological distress in college students, Counselling Centre Assessment of Psychological Symptoms-34 (CCAPS-34) from Hall (2012) applies in this research. CCAPS-34 consists of seven domains: depression, generalized anxiety, social anxiety, eating concerns, academic distress, hostility, and alcohol use. These subscales comprise 34 items in which they related to psychological symptoms in students and relevant to be considered as a clinical instrument in counselling to assess

students' psychological well-being. However, the domain of academic distress in CCAPS-34 does not use in this research project as an academic adjustment scale (AAS) from Anderson et al. (2016) replaces the academic part.

This study helps to provide interrelation information between psychological distress and academic adjustment in students. Thus, AAS from Anderson et al. (2016) found to be more applicable to students who have gone through a few semesters in their college year as they get familiarise with their learning environment. AAS covers three sub-dimensions: academic lifestyle (AAS-L), academic achievement (AAS-A), and academic motivation (AAS-M). Each of the sub-psychometric property composes of three items. Nevertheless, the combination results of these two scales could be useful for future research on the psychological well-being of an individual.

1.8 Definition of terms

This research discovers the description of the nature of psychological distress and its domains, academic adjustment, and its domain based on different perspectives and denotations from researchers and reviews.

1.8.1 Psychological distress

Arvidsdotter et al. (2016) refer to psychological distress as a state of emotional suffering commonly related to mental health issues, including depression and anxiety. Ali et al. (2017) and Sreevani, Lau, Rajashree, and Sunanda (2019) defined psychological distress as the state of having low psychological well-being characterized by uniform mixtures of symptoms from depression to anxiety, functional disabilities, and behavioural problems. In this research context, psychological distress views as the unexpectedly emotional events resulted in multiple unpleasant encounters such as the feeling of anxiety, tension, stress, and nervousness.

1.8.2 Psychological distress domains

1.8.2.1 Depression

Ali et al. (2014) disclosed depression as a type of disorder that marked diminished interest in pleasure activity for instance impaired appetite, disturbed sleep, lack of concentration, little physical strength, retardation, worthlessness, or suicidal thoughts. Meanwhile, Latifah et al. (2016) characterized depression as the sadness, feelings of guilt, loss of interest, and low concentration. In other words, depression could appear as the feeling of low spirit or dejection, mental distress, deep disappointment, and failure in fulfilling specific goals in life, which may lead to suicidal impression.

1.8.2.2 Generalized anxiety

Smith and Segal (2019) explained that generalized anxiety disorder is the constant feeling of worries, nervousness, and tension, and it is mentally and physically exhausting. Other than that, Carey (2020) described this disorder as the chronic anxiety neurosis whereby uncontrollably worries over something such as financial state or situation. Personally, generalized anxiety is an issue that when a person thinks of matters too much, triggers constant doubts, and fails to relax, which causes fear of failing.

1.8.2.3 Social anxiety

As interpreted by Achmad and Nur (2018), social anxiety is also known as social phobia. It is the feeling of distress when meeting with someone or communicating with others, such as newcomers or unknown persons or friends. According to Pörhölä, Almonkari, and Kunttu (2019), social anxiety is considered a pervasive concern for one or more social or performance conditions whereby others subject a person to unknown individuals or the possibility for criticism. From a personal view, social anxiety is the feeling of uneasiness when a person is unfamiliar and may cause constant consciousness, such as low self-esteem or self-judgment over time.

1.8.2.4 Eating disorders

Eating disorder, as defined by Wan, Mohd Taib, Mohd Shariff, and Abu Saad (2011), is the symptoms of troublesome eating behaviours, such as restrictive dieting, bingeing, or purging regardless of the occurring period. Another category of eating disorder described by He et al. (2018) is the night eating disorder among college students are the evening hyperphagia, nocturnal ingestions, and sleep and mood disturbances. In other understanding, the disorder in eating is the habit of uncontrolled eating consumption that may cause indigestion due to inconsistency of mealtime.

1.8.2.5 Hostility

Hostility is defined as an adverse action or judgement toward others and is related to emotions toward hatred, anger and indignation (Vinnu et al., 2019). The fundamental concept of hostility applies to nature towards others' resentment and unfavourable judgement (Ayman, 2010). Personally, hostility described as the disagreement and resistance to reasoning or idea; unfriendly and not amicable when in a particular situation.

1.8.2.6 Alcohol use

Alcohol use uttered by Piumatti, Lietz, Aresi, and Bjegovic-Mikanovic (2018) is the frequency of drinking and high level of alcohol consumption, similarly mentioned by Wolff, Rospenda, and Colaneri (2017) the alcohol use specifically refer to binge drinking and alcohol issues in an individual. Therefore, alcohol use, also known as the addiction to alcohol, it refers to the high level of alcohol intake from the recommended drinking range.

1.8.3 Academic adjustment

Academic adjustment according to Anderson et al. (2016) refers to the success criteria of a student be in charge of their social, psychological, and overcome challenges as they are adapting to life in higher education. This statement is supported by Achmad and Nur (2018) that academic adjustment as the ability of the individual to manage their social

challenges, psychologist, and knowledge when to undergo a transition to college life. In other words, when the individual competent to overcome the significant obstacles in college year, with constant motivation, and achieving better in an academic area for a period that considers as progress in academic adjustment.

1.8.4 Academic adjustment domains

1.8.4.1 Academic lifestyle

Anderson et al. (2016) described the academic lifestyle as the fit between the individual and their temporary role as a student. As well, as mentioned by Malarvili and Saroja (2018), academic life is due to the different personalities and characteristics that influence the way students react to stressors in a student's life. Besides, the academic lifestyle is when the students can carry out themselves, suit university life, and try to meet the requirement needed as a student.

1.8.4.2 Academic motivation

According to Anderson et al. (2016), academic motivation refers to the drive for the students to move on and complete their academics throughout their study year. In another term, motivation as defined by Karaman, Nelson, and Vela (2018), as a characteristic of personality that enables an individual to achieve their own internalized excellence standards. Subsequently, academic motivation is the willingness and continuing effort to achieve beyond the skill and capacity of the individual to complete the goals effectively.

1.8.4.3 Academic achievement

Anderson et al. (2016) affirmed that academic achievement is the satisfaction with academic progress and performance; meanwhile, Steinmayr et al. (2017) described the academic achievement as the performance outcomes that student completes successfully individually in their studies live. Academic achievement, also known as academic performance, and refers to the continuous progress made by an individual, especially to achieve the desired goals academically.

1.8.5 Technical education institution

StudyMalaysia (2016) described technical education as both a formal and non-formal learning program for students who prefer acquiring knowledge and practical skills for future work settings. Apart from this, according to Article Directory (2018) from Study.com, the technical school also called as technical institutions provide different ranges of training or profession that focus on skills and abilities such as culinary arts, electrics and electronics, automotive technology, business, and accountant.

1.9 Conclusion

Psychological distress is one of the social illnesses prevalent in today's society. In many cases, psychological issues review as a gesture of personality disorder and utterly lacking in moral values. Ali et al. (2017) referred that diagnosis studies of psychological well-being among students are limited; thus, the tendency to have mental disorders among students is higher. As students are making their ways from secondary education to tertiary education, adaptation to the new environment is one of the essential components to cope with to meet their academic needs. Consequently, this study is to put curiosity and outreach efforts to identify and assist students with signs and symptoms of psychological distress. Guidance or recommendations are necessary for future actions.

5.6 Conclusion

Quantitatively, there was a significant difference between psychological distress and gender. Male students and female students of semester three in technical college were profoundly affected by these symptoms differently. Likewise, there was also a significant correlation between psychological distress and academic adjustment among students in this population. There were the tendency and likelihood of the aspects of psychological wellbeing will put an impact on students' academic lifestyle, academic achievement, and academic motivation. However, the present study was unable to identify and accounted for the relationship between these two variables thoroughly as more studies needed to support and claim that academic adjustment level could be considered affected by psychological distress. Implications of this study were broad because one institution only represented a significant proportion of the sample of the population. Briefly, the present findings contribute to the existing literature by putting forward the consideration of the relationship between psychological distress and academic adjustment.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Psychological Distress and Academic Adjustment in Technical College Students

This survey questionnaire is conducted as part of Master's Project research in Open University Malaysia (OUM). It is meant for educational purposes only and is randomly distributed among college students. Your participation in this questionnaire is completely anonymous.

This survey comprises 3 parts; Part A: Gender and Academic Adjustment, Part B: Psychological Distress Symptoms and Part C: Academic Adjustment. This survey questionnaire only takes 5 minutes of your time.

Part A:

Gender

Male ☐

Female ☐

Academic Adjustment

Civil Engineering	
Mechanical Engineering	
Electric Engineering	
Commerce	
Information Technology and Computer	
Petrochemical Engineering	

Part B: Psychological Distress Psychometric Properties

Instruction:

Please rate each item by circling your response using the following scale.

Not at all like me	A little like me	Definitely like me	Very like me	Extremely like me
1	2	3	4	5

1.	I am shy around others	1	2	3	4	5
2.	My heart races for no good reason	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I feel out of control when I eat	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I don't enjoy being around people as much as I used to	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I feel isolated and alone	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I think about food more than I would like to	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I'm anxious that I might have a panic attack in public	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I have sleep difficulties	1	2	3	4	5
9.	My thoughts are racing	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I feel worthless	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I feel helpless	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I eat too much	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I drink alcohol frequently	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I have spells of terror or panic	1	2	3	4	5
15.	When I drink alcohol I can't remember what happened	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I feel tense	1	2	3	4	5
17.	I have difficulty controlling my temper	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I make friends easily	1	2	3	4	5
19.	I sometimes feel like breaking or smashing things	1	2	3	4	5
20.	I feel sad all the time	1	2	3	4	5
21.	I am concerned that other people do not like me	1	2	3	4	5
22.	I get angry easily	1	2	3	4	5
23.	I feel uncomfortable around people I don't know	1	2	3	4	5
24.	I have thoughts of ending my life	1	2	3	4	5
25.	I feel self-conscious around others	1	2	3	4	5
26.	I drink alcohol more than I should	1	2	3	4	5
27.	I am afraid I may lose control and act violently	1	2	3	4	5
28.	I have done something I have regretted because of drinking	1	2	3	4	5
29.	I frequently get into arguments	1	2	3	4	5
30.	I have thoughts of hurting others	1	2	3	4	5

Adaptation from Counselling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms – 34 (Hall, 2012).

Part C: Academic Adjustment Scale

Instruction:

Please indicate the level of endorsement to which each of the following questions apply to you by circling the option.

Rarely applies to me	Occasionally applies to me	Sometimes applies to me	Often applies to me	Always applies to me
1	2	3	4	5

1.	I am enjoying the lifestyle of being a college student.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I have the academic skills needed to enjoy being a college student.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I am satisfied with the level of my academic performance to date.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I think I am as academically able as any other student.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I am satisfied with my ability to learn at college.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I expect to successfully complete my diploma in the usual allocated timeframe.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The reason I am studying is to lead to a better lifestyle.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I expect my studies don't lead me to the career that I want.	1	2	3	4	5

Adaptation from Academic Adjustment Scale (Anderson et al., 2016).

APPENDIX B



OUM-RPMU/1.5.7/338/MED/202/008

09 JULY 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir,

DATA COLLECTION FOR MASTER'S PROJECT

On behalf of Open University Malaysia (OUM), we would like to seek your kind cooperation and assistance to allow the student to visit your organization for the data collection for his/her project paper in order to fulfill the partial requirements of his/her graduate studies.

Student details are as follows:

Name : JENNIFER ANAK TINI
Matric Number : CGS01233906
Programme : MASTER OF EDUCATION (MED)

We sincerely hope that your organization will be able to assist in the data collection and the distribution of the questionnaires for his/her research.

Please do not hesitate to contact the person in charge : Puan Norhaslin Abdullah Hashim at 03-7801 1818 / norhaslin_hashim@oum.edu.my for further information.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aliza', is positioned above the printed name of the sender.

DR ALIZA BINTI ALI
Cluster Chair of Education & Social Sciences



APPENDIX C

JENNIFER ANAK TINI
Master in Education Program,
Education & Social Sciences Faculty, Open University Malaysia (OUM),
9 ½ Mile, Princess Garden Commercial Centre,
Jalan Kuching-Serian,
93250 Kuching, Sarawak.

JAMALIAH BINTI AHMAD
Director
Politeknik Kuching Sarawak (PKS)
KM 22, Jalan Matang,
93050 Kuching, Sarawak.

9 NOVEMBER 2020.

Dear Madam,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEACH IN PKS

My name is JENNIFER ANAK TINI, and I am a Master in Education student at Open University Malaysia (OUM) in Kuching, Sarawak. The research I wish to conduct in Politeknik Kuching Sarawak for my master's project is "**Psychological Distress and Academic Adjustment in Technical College Students in Kuching, Sarawak**". This project is under the supervision of **Cr. Dr. Ling Ying Yeh, Alan (K.B, P.A)**, lecturer of Mathematics, Science & Computer Department at Politeknik Kuching Sarawak.

I am hereby seeking your consent to conduct online survey questionnaire to semester three students in Politeknik Kuching Sarawak and permission has been approved from *Pusat Penyelidikan dan Inovasi, Jabatan Pendidikan Politeknik dan Kolej Komuniti, Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi*.

Therefore, I provide you with a copy of approval letter from *Pusat Penyelidikan dan Inovasi, Jabatan Pendidikan Politeknik dan Kolej Komuniti, Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi* and letter to conduct master's project from OUM.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 019-4870395 or email at jentini1417@gmail.com. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



JENNIFER ANAK TINI
Master of Education Program
Open University Malaysia (OUM)



**PUSAT PENYELIDIKAN DAN INOVASI
JABATAN PENDIDIKAN POLITEKNIK DAN KOLEJ KOMUNITI
KEMENTERIAN PENGAJIAN TINGGI**

Galeria PjH, Aras 7, Jalan P4W
Persiaran Perdana, Presint 4
62100 W.P. PUTRAJAYA
MALAYSIA

Tel : 03-8891 9000
Faks : 03-8891 9300
Laman Web : www.mypolycc.edu.my

Ruj. Kami : KPT.JPP.PPPP.700-1/1 Jld.14 (9)
Tarikh : 28 Oktober 2020

JENNIFER ANAK TINI

Pelajar Program Sarjana Pendidikan,
Fakulti Pendidikan Dan Sains Sosial, Universiti Terbuka Malaysia (OUM),
9½ Mile, Princess Garden Commercial Centre, Jalan Kuching-Serian,
93250 Kuching,
Sarawak.

Puan,

**KEBENARAN MENJALANKAN PENYELIDIKAN BERTAJUK “PSYCHOLOGICAL
DISTRESS AND ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT IN TECHNICAL COLLEGE
STUDENTS IN KUCHING, SARAWAK”**

Saya dengan hormatnya merujuk perkara di atas.

2. Sukacita dimaklumkan bahawa pihak kami tiada halangan untuk memberi kebenaran kepada puan untuk menjalankan penyelidikan bertajuk ***“Psychological Distress And Academic Adjustment In Technical College Students In Kuching, Sarawak”*** seperti yang dijelaskan dalam cadangan penyelidikan yang disertakan.

3. Kebenaran pengumpulan data hanya diberikan kepada penama dalam surat ini sahaja. Pihak ketiga dan Pusat Penyelidikan dan Inovasi (PPI), Jabatan Pendidikan Politeknik dan Kolej Komuniti (JPPKK) tidak terlibat dalam penyebaran dan pengumpulan data bagi pihak penama. Sekiranya terdapat ketidakpatuhan, kebenaran ini terbatal dengan sendirinya.

4. Sebarang pertanyaan lanjut berkenaan kajian penyelidikan yang akan dijalankan, sila hubungi Ketua Unit Penyelidikan Politeknik yang berkenaan untuk melancarkan lagi pelaksanaan kajian.

5. Sebagai peringatan, puan hendaklah mengemukakan senaskah laporan akhir kajian tersebut ke PPI. Dimaklumkan juga bahawa puan adalah diminta mendapatkan kebenaran terlebih dahulu daripada PPI sekiranya sebahagian atau sepenuhnya dapatan penyelidikan tersebut hendak dibentangkan di mana-mana persidangan atau seminar, atau untuk pengumuman di media massa.

Sekian untuk makluman dan tindakan seterusnya, terima kasih.

“BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA”

Saya yang menjalankan amanah,



(DR. ISHAK BIN MOHAMAD)

Pengarah

Pusat Penyelidikan dan Inovasi

Jabatan Pendidikan Politeknik dan Kolej Komuniti

Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi

s.k : Pengarah Politeknik Kuching, Sarawak.



POLITEKNIK KUCHING SARAWAK
KEMENTERIAN PENGAJIAN TINGGI
KM 22, Jalan Matang
93050 Kuching
Sarawak, Malaysia



Tel: +6 082 - 845596 / 7 / 8
Faks: +6 082 - 845023
www.poliku.edu.my

No Rujukan: PKS.100-2/11 ()
Tarikh: 10 Disember 2020

Jennifer Anak Tini (CGS01233906)
Cluster of Education and Social Sciences
Open University Malaysia
9 ½ Mile, Princess Garden Commercial Centre
Jalan Kuching Serian
93250 Kuching

Puan,

KEBENARAN MENJALANKAN PENYELIDIKAN BERTAJUK “PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AND ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT IN TECHNICAL COLLEGE STUDENTS IN KUCHING, SARAWAK”

Surat puan bertarikh 9 November 2020 adalah dirujuk.

2. Sukacita dimaklumkan tiada halangan daripada pihak kami untuk membenarkan puan menggunakan pelajar Politeknik Kuching Sarawak yang terdiri daripada Semester 3 sebagai sampel kajian.

3. Sebagai peringatan, puan dimohon untuk mengemukakan senaskah laporan akhir kepada pihak kami setelah selesai kelak.

Sekian untuk makluman dan tindakan puan selanjutnya. Terima kasih.

“BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA”

Saya yang menjalankan amanah,


(JAMAL AH BINTI AHMAD)
Pengarah
Politeknik Kuching Sarawak

