

Does Assertiveness Correlate with Second-Year Student Adjustment in the College?

Maria Nugraheni Mardi Rahayu
Satya Wacana Christian University
Indonesia
nugraheni.maria@uksw.edu

Abstract

The first two years of college are crucial for student retention, yet universities typically allocate significant resources to support first-year students while providing less assistance to second-year students. Second-year students face unique challenges that differ from those encountered in their first year. Previous studies examining the experiences of second-year students have revealed an increased vulnerability to dissatisfaction and dropout rates. In order to adapt successfully, second-year students need to develop assertiveness skills. This research aims to investigate the relationship between assertiveness and adjustment among second-year students at Satya Wacana Christian University (SWCU), specifically within the Psychology Faculty. The study included 264 participants (mean age = 19.23 years, SD = 0.85 years, 71.97% female). Two measurement instruments, the Assertiveness Formative Questionnaire and the Students' Adjustment to College Questionnaire, were utilized. The correlation test results indicate a significant positive relationship between assertiveness and academic adjustment ($r = 0.381$, sig. = 0.000), social adjustment ($r_s = 0.438$, sig. = 0.000), personal-emotional adjustment ($r = 0.207$, sig. = 0.001), and institutional attachment ($r_s = 0.249$, sig. = 0.000). These findings suggest that higher levels of assertiveness among students are associated with greater levels of academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. These insights can serve as a reference for other institutions to develop targeted programs aimed at enhancing students' assertiveness to facilitate the adjustment process.

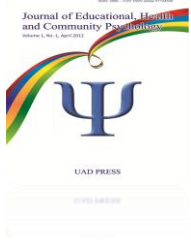
Keywords: assertiveness, college adjustment, second-year student.

Introduction

The transition from high school to university is often challenging for individuals, as highlighted in previous studies (Cage, Jones, Ryan, Hughes & Spanner, 2021; Rahayu & Arianti, 2020; Mutambara & Bhebe, 2012; Thurber & Walton, 2012). In order to navigate these challenges, students must adapt to their new environment. Adjustment refers to the psychological process of coping with, managing, and

adapting to the problems, challenges, and demands of daily life (Simons, Kalichman, & Santrock, 1994, as cited in Clinciu & Cazan, 2013). Effective adjustment is crucial for students to handle social, psychological, and academic issues when transitioning to college life (Anderson & Guan, 2017). Research has consistently shown that the first two years of college are critical for student retention (Salmain, Azar & Salmani, 2014). However, universities have traditionally invested heavily in supporting first-year students, while providing less support in the subsequent years. This is problematic considering that the second year brings increasing academic, developmental, and social demands, and students who struggle to adjust during this period are more likely to drop out (Lipka, 2006, as cited in Sterling, 2018).

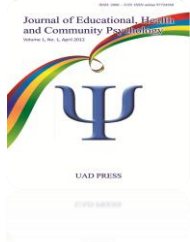
Adjusting to university is a complex and multifaceted process that involves various types and degrees of demands, necessitating diverse coping strategies and encompassing factors beyond academic performance (Fernandez, Araujo, Vacas, Almeida & Gonzales, 2017). Specifically, Baker and Siryk (1984) explained that students' adjustment in tertiary institutions encompasses multiple dimensions, including academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustments. Academic adjustment reflects a student's ability to fulfill college assignments, maintain motivation, translate motivation into academic effort, build confidence and achieve success, as well as satisfaction with the academic environment (Baker, 2002). Social adjustment relates to students' success in establishing relationships and engaging in social activities on campus, while overcoming feelings of detachment from their home environment (Baker & Siryk, 1984). Personal-emotional adjustment represents the psychological and physical well-being experienced by students during the adjustment process in tertiary institutions. Institutional attachment refers to students' satisfaction with their decision to attend college in general, as well as their satisfaction with the chosen educational institution (Gold, Burrell, Haynes, & Nardecchia, 1990). Successful academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional attachment can be observed through students' involvement in university activities, their psychological well-being, and their academic performance (Mutambara & Bhebe, 2012).



Previous studies conducted on first-year students from the Psychology Faculty of Satya Wacana Christian University (SWCU) have indicated that some students exhibit lower levels of adjustment compared to their peers in terms of academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional attachments (Rahayu & Arianti, 2020). This suggests that not all students can easily overcome the issues, stress, and demands they encounter in college. Furthermore, in 2020, Indonesia faced the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated a shift from offline to online learning activities conducted from home. Satya Wacana Christian University implemented the same policy, transitioning to online learning for all students since March 2020. As a result, the New Student Orientation program was also conducted online to assist new students in their initial adjustment process at the university.

The challenges of online learning and orientation undoubtedly affected the Class of 2021 students who began their first year of study during the pandemic. In April 2022, interviews with students from the Psychology Faculty of SWCU revealed that online learning made it more difficult for them to get to know their classmates as they had never met face-to-face. Limited communication with new classmates, seniors, and lecturers also hindered the development of relationships in their new environment. Students from the Class of 2021 who did not reside in Salatiga expressed unfamiliarity with the campus environment due to attending lectures remotely from their respective regions. Some students also reported a lack of the typical learning atmosphere during their first year due to the pandemic.

Preliminary data indicate that the pandemic situation and online learning have posed more significant challenges to the Class of 2021 students in the Psychology Faculty compared to those who experienced the first year before the pandemic. Their initial experiences in tertiary institutions can influence their attitudes and confidence towards their future studies (Dawborn-Gundlach & Margetts, 2018). Meanwhile, the Class of 2021 students will now enter their second year of study, which presents distinct challenges. The sophomore year is a unique and crucial developmental period where



students reflect on their purpose (Schaller, 2010). This phase involves introspection and exploration of one's place in college life and the world. Sterling (2018) argues that sophomores face four distinct challenges: adapting to new academic demands, resolving developmental concerns, navigating institutional requirements, and meeting expectations. Students who struggle to meet these demands may become disillusioned and experience the sophomore slump, a leading cause of attrition in the second year (Freedman, 1956, as cited in Sterling, 2018).

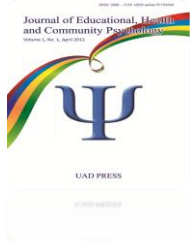
Building upon the experiences of the first year, the second year of study brings increased academic, developmental, and social demands. However, universities often provide less attention and support to sophomore students compared to first-year students. Sophomore year, whether defined by credit hours or the actual second year of college, represents an important developmental phase where students examine their life purpose (Schaller, 2010). Sterling (2018) explains that sophomores are still in the process of constructing their identities, re-evaluating their goals and experiences in college, and undergoing internal transitions. They still require support to thrive and meet the demands of progressing through college, which differ from those faced by first-year students. In general, second-year students encounter a more diverse set of challenges unique to their experience, as highlighted by research indicating increased dissatisfaction and attrition rates during this period (Sanchez-Leguinel, 2008). Moreover, sophomore year represents a crucial time for students to develop decision-making skills, find meaning and purpose in education, and shape their life and career goals (Schaller, 2010; Johnson, Shoulder, Edgar & Dixon, 2018). However, sophomores who successfully navigate these challenges can ultimately have a fulfilling collegiate experience (Sterling, 2018).

In order to effectively navigate the numerous challenges encountered in higher education institutions, students must possess adequate communication skills to adapt well to their environment. Communication plays a crucial role in the adjustment process as it enables students to establish social connections with those around them and cultivate a positive social self-image (Riggio, Throckmorton, & DePaola, 1990 as cited in Sarkova et al., 2013). Defined as a dynamic process of conveying meaning

through verbal and nonverbal symbols (Wood, 2010), communication is essential for individuals to interact with others and meet their social needs (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2010). Developing strong communication skills is vital for establishing interpersonal relationships and effectively engaging in everyday life (Ceyhan, 2006). According to Fischer (2007, as cited in Schaller, 2010), a student's ability to form friendships in college can reduce the likelihood of leaving the university without completing their studies. Effective communication skills have a profound impact on relationships, academic performance, and personal development. This is because young adults with proficient communication skills are more successful in social interactions, self-development, and the adjustment process (Greene, 2010). Therefore, students must possess communication skills to support their adjustment process in higher education. One fundamental interpersonal communication skill that can help students meet social demands in their environment is assertiveness (Kirst, 2011; Sitota, 2018).

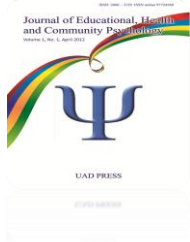
Assertiveness refers to the ability to express oneself confidently and directly without feelings of anxiety or aggression in various situations (Bouvard et al., 1999, in Sarkova et al., 2013). Gaumer Erickson and Noonan (2021) explain that assertiveness entails expressing beliefs, desires, or feelings while respecting others. Other researchers have highlighted assertiveness as a crucial social skill that enhances personal well-being (Parray & Kumar, 2016) and supports individuals in education, work, social life, and other domains (Sitota, 2018; Orr, 2003). Assertiveness, as a social skill, encompasses dimensions such as expressing oneself without anxiety or aggression across different situations (Bouvard et al., 1999 in Parray & Kumar, 2016). It involves appropriately expressing ideas, feelings, and boundaries while respecting others' rights, maintaining a positive influence on recipients, and considering the potential consequences of self-disclosure (Pfafman, 2017). Assertiveness comprises two main components: the ability to express one's thoughts, needs, and beliefs, and the ability to respect the thoughts, needs, and beliefs of others (Gaumer Erickson & Noonan, 2021).

Alberti and Emmons (2017) explain that assertive individuals act in their best interest without experiencing excessive anxiety or disregarding the rights of others. In contrast, individuals who lack



assertiveness tend to communicate their viewpoints and feelings in an overly apologetic, timid, and self-deprecating manner, resulting in being overlooked by others (Lange & Jakubowski, 1976). Thus, assertiveness involves striking a balance between being aggressive and submissive, promoting self-respect, respect for others, and cooperation (Kirst, 2011). With high levels of assertiveness, individuals can take independent initiatives, demonstrate mature thinking, and behave in ways that facilitate the attainment of learning objectives (Rosita, 2007, as cited in Indraswari, Irtadji, & Dwiastuti, 2017). Students with low assertiveness (passive) allow others to violate their rights and are preoccupied with being liked or accepted by others. On the other hand, aggressive students tend to disregard the rights of others despite upholding their own rights (Ghodrati, Tavakoli, Heydari, & Akbarzadeh, 2016).

Moon (2009) elucidated several benefits of assertiveness in social and academic domains. Assertive students are more likely to receive necessary help when facing difficulties, avoid feeling trapped, become more aware of their rights as individuals, demonstrate responsibility toward others, and express their feelings openly and appropriately. Developing assertiveness skills also aids in academic pursuits, career development, and social relationships (Moon, 2009). Research conducted by Lambertz-Bendt and Blight (2006, as cited in Gultekin, Ozdemir, and Budak, 2018) found that students who exhibit assertiveness enjoy positive interpersonal relationships with their lecturers, friends, and others in their environment. Assertiveness can assist students in resolving various academic and social problems. Assertive students can confidently express their opinions in class, seek clarification when faced with difficulties, and seek assistance or advice from peers and lecturers (Lee & Ciftci, 2014). In social settings, students with higher assertiveness are better equipped to establish meaningful relationships with others (Peneva & Mavrodiev, 2013). Furthermore, assertive behavior enables students to negotiate effectively in confrontational situations (Moon, 2009), solve complex problems, and enhance the quality of their social lives (Parmakzis, 2019), as their superior communication skills surpass those lacking assertiveness (Karahan, 2005).



Previous studies have demonstrated a significant relationship between assertiveness and the adjustment of first-year students in junior high school (Azhari, Mayangsari, & Eryani, 2015). Rohmah (2019) also found a significant relationship between assertiveness and the adjustment of first-year students. Gavinta and Hartati (2015) investigated first-year medical students and found a significant and positive correlation between assertiveness and self-adjustment. However, research examining assertiveness and adjustment in tertiary institutions among sophomore students remains limited. Additionally, most studies on student assertiveness and adjustment primarily focus on academic and social adjustment, while placing less emphasis on emotional adjustment and institutional attachment. On the other hand, sophomore students also experience the need for emotional adjustment and the development of institutional attachment. Personal-emotional adjustment and institutional attachment are crucial factors that reduce the likelihood of students dropping out of their studies. Moreover, second-year students face unique conditions and challenges that warrant study. Additionally, the class of 2021 students are experiencing an exceptional situation where they must study online from their homes, unlike previous cohorts.

Based on the aforementioned descriptions, this research aims to investigate the significant relationship between assertiveness and adjustment among sophomore students of the Psychology Faculty at SWCU. The hypothesis posits that there is a relationship between assertiveness and student adjustment in college, encompassing dimensions of academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment among second-year students in tertiary institutions. This research aims to expand our understanding of the relationship between assertiveness and student adjustment, while also providing valuable insights for the faculty and university to develop programs, such as assertiveness training, that can aid sophomore students in their adjustment process. Neglecting the adjustment difficulties faced by second-year students may lead to exacerbated academic, social, and emotional challenges, thereby increasing the likelihood of students not completing their studies.

Method

Research Design

This research adopts a correlational quantitative approach, focusing on two variables. The dependent variable pertains to the adjustment of students in tertiary institutions, encompassing four dimensions: academic, social, personal-emotional adjustments, and institutional attachment. The independent variable is assertiveness.

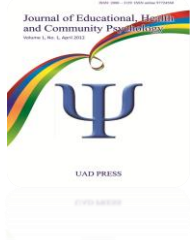
Participants

The participants in this study are second-year students from the Faculty of Psychology who belong to the class of 2021. A total of 264 sophomore students were included as participants. The average age of the participants is 19.23 years ($SD = 0.85$ years). Table I provides an overview of the demographic data of the students.

Table I
The Data of Participants' Demography

Category		Total	%
Age	18 years old	30	11,36%
	19 years old	170	64,39%
	20 years old	46	17,42%
	21 years old	11	4,17%
	22 years old	5	1,89%
	23 years old	1	0,38%
	24 years old	1	0,38%
	Total		264
Gender	Male	74	28,03%
	Female	190	71,97%

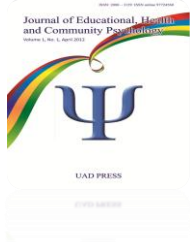
Category		Total	%
	Total	264	100%
Students' residence	Family home	90	34,09%
	Boarding house	167	63,26%
	Rent house (with friends)	6	2,27%
	Dormitory	1	0,38%
	Total	264	100%
Local students/sojourner	Local student	80	30,30%
	Sojourner	184	69,70%
	Total	264	100%
Students' Origin (for sojourners)	Sumatera	18	9,78%
	Java	78	42,39%
	Kalimantan	15	8,15%
	Bali and Nusa Tenggara	21	11,41%
	Sulawesi	30	16,30%
	Maluku	8	4,35%
	Papua	14	7,61%
	Total	184	100%
Duration of living in Salatiga (for sojourner)	Less than 3 months	78	42,39%
	3 – 6 months	40	21,74%
	6 – 9 months	22	11,96%
	9 – 12 months	26	14,13%
	More than 12 months	18	9,78%
	Total	184	100%



Measures

This research utilizes two scales to measure the variables. The first scale employed is the Students Adjustments to College Questionnaire (SACQ), initially developed by Baker and Siryk (1984). The SACQ has been previously translated into Indonesian in a study conducted by Rahayu and Arianti (2020) and subsequently reviewed by an independent translator with an educational background in Psychology and experience studying in an English-speaking country. Comprising 65 positive and negative statement items, the SACQ is divided into four subscales: academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. The instrument employs a Likert scale ranging from 1-5, with responses ranging from "not very like me" to "very like me." Sample statements from the SACQ include "I keep up to date with my coursework," "I am very engaged in social activities on campus," "I have difficulty coping with the pressure that I experience in college," and "I wish I could stay in this college until I graduate." Reliability tests yielded alpha scores of $\alpha = 0.855$ for academic adjustment, $\alpha = 0.836$ for social adjustment, $\alpha = 0.865$ for personal-emotional adjustment, and $\alpha = 0.824$ for institutional attachment subscales. The corrected total item correlation scores for the academic adjustment subscale, consisting of 22 items, ranged from 0.254 to 0.610. The social adjustment subscale, comprising 15 items, exhibited a range of 0.292 to 0.691. The personal-emotional adjustment subscale, containing 15 items, had a range of 0.265 to 0.674. Lastly, the institutional attachment subscale, with 7 items, demonstrated a range of 0.442 to 0.747. Two statement items were removed from the academic adjustment subscale (numbers 23 and 44), as well as five items from the social adjustment subscale (numbers 22, 26, 33, 56, and 57) due to their corrected item-total correlation score being lower than 0.25. The analysis involved a total of 58 statement items. However, statement number 16 belonged to two subscales (social adjustment and institutional attachment) as per the blueprint developed by Baker and Siryk (1984).

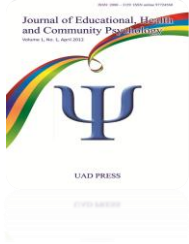
The measurement of student assertiveness is conducted using the Assertiveness Formative Questionnaire (AFQ) developed by Gaumer Erickson and Noonan (2021), which was subsequently translated into Indonesian by an independent translator with an educational background in psychology



and experience studying in an English-speaking country. The AFQ comprises twenty positive and negative statements, categorized into two aspects. The first aspect focuses on expressing wants, needs, and thoughts, consisting of 13 positive and negative statements that assess an individual's ability to express their wants, needs, and thoughts. The second aspect pertains to respecting others and encompasses 7 positive and negative statements gauging an individual's ability to respect what others want, need, and think. This instrument employs a Likert scale ranging from 1-5, indicating responses from "not very like me" to "very like me." Sample statements from the AFQ include "I will state my opinion even if others disagree," "I often avoid asking questions because I am afraid of being seen as stupid," and "I am careful not to hurt other people's feelings even when I feel that they have been wronged." Test results indicated that the Assertiveness Formative Scale's 15 statement items exhibited corrected total-item correlation scores ranging from 0.251 to 0.604, with a reliability level of $\alpha = 0.752$. Five statement items (numbers 5, 8, 11, 14, and 15) were eliminated from the test due to their corrected total-item correlation score being lower than 0.25, and they will not be included in the subsequent testing process.

Procedures

The participants in this research consist of sophomore (second-year) students from the Psychology Faculty of UKSW. They were recruited through an announcement made at the end of the Social Psychology class attended by the class of 2021 students. The inclusion criteria for this study were students who had progressed to their second year of study (class of 2021) and had not taken a leave of absence from college. Five classes from the Social Psychology course were involved in this research. Data collection took place immediately after the announcement, and students who were absent or unwilling to participate were not included in the study. The purpose of the research was explained to the participants at the beginning of the questionnaire, following which they were asked to provide informed consent and complete a questionnaire consisting of participant demographic data, an assertiveness scale, and an adjustment scale.



Statistical Analysis

To address the research questions, the researcher employed parametric statistics, specifically Pearson's Product Moment correlation test, as well as non-parametric statistics using the Spearman-Rho correlation test. Prior to hypothesis testing, classic assumption tests, including assessments of normality and linearity, were conducted.

Results

Descriptive Statistical Results

The average score on the assertiveness scale for the 264 respondents was 54.34 (SD = 7.16, Min = 35, Max = 73). Additionally, the average score for the academic adjustment subscale was 70.06 (SD = 12.14, Min = 28, Max = 100). The social adjustment subscale yielded a score of 50.36 (SD = 9.23, Min = 16, Max = 73), while the personal-emotional adjustment subscale produced a score of 38.31 (SD = 10.84, Min = 15, Max = 68). Lastly, the institutional attachment subscale yielded a score of 28.11 (SD = 5.49, Min = 7, Max = 35). Subsequently, the researcher categorized the data to provide descriptions of the levels of assertiveness, academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. Table 2 presents the results of this data categorization.

Data categorization reveals that the majority of second-year students from the Psychology Faculty who participated in this research exhibited a moderate level of assertiveness (63.64%), followed by 20.08% categorized as low. Regarding academic adjustment, most second-year students from the Psychology Faculty of UKSW demonstrated a moderate level (71.59%), as did the social adjustment level (68.94%). In terms of personal-emotional adjustment, 68.18% of participants exhibited a moderate level, while 65.91% showed a moderate level of institutional attachment.

Table 2
The Categorization of All Variables

				Low	Moderate	High	Total
Assertiveness	M	54,34	N	53	168	43	264
	SD	7,16	%	20,08	63,64	16,29	100
Academic Adjustment	M	70,06	N	36	189	39	264
	SD	12,14	%	13,64	71,59	14,77	100
Social Adjustment	M	50,36	N	39	182	43	264
	SD	9,23	%	14,77	68,94	16,29	100
Personal-Emotional Adjustment	M	38,31	N	44	180	40	264
	SD	10,84	%	16,67	68,18	15,15	100
Institutional Attachment	M	28,11	N	41	174	49	264
	SD	5,49	%	15,53	65,91	18,56	100

Classic Assumption Tests

Prior to hypothesis testing, normality and linearity tests were conducted. The normality test for the variables of assertiveness, academic adjustment, and personal-emotional adjustment utilized the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which yielded a significance score of >0.05 . Consequently, the data distribution for these three variables was determined to be normal. Conversely, the normality test for social adjustment and institutional attachment, also employing the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, resulted in a significance score of <0.05 , indicating that the data distribution for these two variables is not normal (see Table 3).

Table 3
Normality Test

	Statistic	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	
		Sig.	Conclusion
Assertiveness	0,051	0,093	Normally distributed
Academic adjustment	0,043	0,200	Normally distributed
Social adjustment	0,056	0,045	Not normally distributed
Personal-emotional adjustment	0,052	0,078	Normally distributed
Institutional attachment	0,114	0,000	Not normally distributed

The results of the linearity test, presented in Table 4, examine the relationship between assertiveness and academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. The findings indicate that assertiveness exhibits a linear relationship with academic adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment, with p-values greater than 0.05. However, the relationship between assertiveness and social adjustment shows a significance score below 0.05, suggesting a non-linear relationship between these two variables.

Table 4
Linearity Test

	F	Deviation from Linearity	
		Sig.	Conclusion
Assertiveness * Academic adjustment	0,925	0,627	Linear
Assertiveness * Social adjustment	1,538	0,023	Non-Linear
Assertiveness * Personal-emotional adjustment	0,865	0,721	Linear
Assertiveness * Institutional attachment	1,291	0,177	Non-Linear

Hypothesis Testing

After conducting the classical assumption tests, parametric statistics were utilized to examine the correlation between assertiveness, academic adjustment, and personal-emotional adjustment. Moreover, non-parametric statistical tests were performed to investigate the correlation among assertiveness, social adjustment, and institutional attachment. The correlation test results are displayed in Tables 5 and 6.

Tabel 5
Correlation Test Result (Pearson's Product Moment)

	Pearson's Coefficient Correlation		
	R	Sig.	Conclusion
Assertiveness * Academic adjustment	0,381**	0,000	Reject H0 (there is significant correlation)
Assertiveness * Personal-emotional adjustment	0,207**	0,001	Reject H0 (there is significant correlation)

Tabel 6
Correlation Test Result (Spearman-Rho)

	Spearman-Rho Coefficient Correlation		
	r _s	Sig.	Conclusion
Assertiveness * Social adjustment	0,438**	0,000	Reject H0 (there is significant correlation)
Assertiveness * Institutional attachment	0,249**	0,000	Reject H0 (there is significant correlation)

The results of both parametric and non-parametric correlation tests indicate significant positive relationships between assertiveness and the four dimensions of student adjustment. Specifically, assertiveness demonstrates a significant positive correlation with academic adjustment ($r = 0.381$, $\text{sig.} = 0.000$), social adjustment ($r_s = 0.438$, $\text{sig.} = 0.000$), personal-emotional adjustment ($r = 0.207$, $\text{sig.} = 0.001$), and institutional attachment ($r_s = 0.249$, $\text{sig.} = 0.000$). These findings suggest that higher assertiveness levels are associated with increased levels of academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment among second-year students. Among the four dimensions, the correlation coefficient between assertiveness and social adjustment exhibits the highest level of correlation ($r_s = 0.438$, $\text{sig.} = 0.000$).

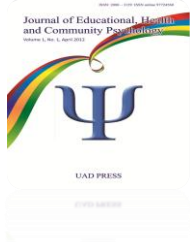
Discussion

Based on the findings, there is a significant positive correlation between assertiveness and academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional attachment among second-year students. Possessing a higher level of assertiveness correlates with a higher level of student adjustment in academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional attachment within tertiary institutions. These results align with Parmakzis' (2019) findings, which indicate that assertiveness is a significant predictor of student academic, social, and personal-emotional adjustments, as well as institutional attachment to the college. Specifically, a correlation analysis reveals a significant correlation between assertiveness and academic adjustment, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.381$ ($\text{sig.} = 0.000$). This correlation is classified as a weak level according to Schober, Boer, and Schwarte (2018). A higher level of assertiveness enables sophomore students to confidently and assertively express their beliefs, desires, or feelings while respecting others, leading to improved ability to respond to academic demands. The second year of study is a crucial period when students actively strive to clarify their course goals, driven by the need to choose their area of interest and career goals (Sterling, 2018). Moreover, the academic workload in the second year tends to be more challenging than in the first year. Assertiveness plays a role in assisting second-year students in addressing the challenges they encounter during lectures. By

expressing opinions, asking questions, and seeking help or advice from lecturers or peers for assignments, assertive students demonstrate confidence, positive mindset, and easier adjustment to academic life (Lee & Ciftci, 2014; Parmakzis, 2019).

Additionally, there is a correlation between assertiveness and student social adjustment, with a correlation coefficient of $r_s = 0.438$ (sig. = 0.000). This correlation is classified as a moderate level according to Schober et al. (2018). The results support Simarmata and Rahayu's (2018) findings, indicating a significant positive correlation between assertiveness and social adjustment in adolescents residing in social homes in South Jakarta. Moreover, Rini, Bahri, and Zuliani (2016) reported a significant relationship between assertive behavior and social adjustment. Success in the social adjustment process for students can be observed through their involvement in social activities, functioning, and interactions with others on campus, as well as their satisfaction with the current social environment. Building and maintaining meaningful relationships is a key task for second-year students (Sterling, 2018). Assertive individuals can initiate, maintain, and terminate conversations, which is essential for meaningful relationship-building and social adjustment in higher education settings (Lazarus, 1973 in Peneva & Mavrodiev, 2013).

Furthermore, assertiveness correlates with students' personal-emotional adjustment, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.207$ (sig. = 0.001), classified as a weak correlation (Schober et al., 2018). This finding indicates that second-year students who can express their beliefs, desires, or feelings confidently and assertively while respecting others tend to experience better psychological well-being and physical conditions during the adjustment process in college. Sarkova et al. (2013) found a relationship between assertiveness and psychological well-being in adolescents in the Slovak Republic, supporting the current results. Additionally, Pourjali and Zarnaghash (2010) reported a significant relationship between assertiveness and the mental health of undergraduate students at Shiraz University. Assertiveness enables students to openly communicate their wants and needs, express their emotions positively and negatively, and seek support from family, peers, or institutions to manage the challenges encountered

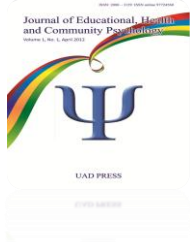


during the adjustment process.

Lastly, there is a significant positive relationship between assertiveness and institutional attachment, with a correlation coefficient of $r_s = 0.249$ ($\text{sig.} = 0.000$), classified as a weak correlation (Schober et al., 2018). This finding suggests that the ability to express beliefs, desires, or feelings confidently and assertively while respecting others contributes to satisfaction with the decision to continue studying at the chosen faculty and university. Assertive individuals can clearly and directly state their views, making independent choices based on personal opinions, which leads to higher institutional attachment (Salter, 2002 in Peneva & Mavrodiev, 2013; Baker & Siryk, 1984; Rahayu & Arianti, 2020). Institutions that can meet the needs of assertive students tend to foster higher satisfaction and stronger institutional attachment (Baker & Siryk, 1984). The second-year students' decision to remain at the institution or select a different major can be influenced by the institution's ability to meet their needs. Assertive students can effectively communicate their needs to the institution, increasing the likelihood of receiving appropriate assistance. Consequently, their satisfaction and institutional attachment improve (Baker & Siryk, 1984).

The categorization of participant data reveals that the majority of second-year students (63.64%) in the Psychology Faculty of UKSW have a moderate level of assertiveness, indicating their ability to express their beliefs, desires, or feelings confidently, firmly, and respectfully. However, 20.08% of second-year students still possess a low level of assertiveness, indicating a need for improvement in their ability to express themselves assertively.

Regarding adjustment variables, most second-year students in the Psychology Faculty of UKSW demonstrate a moderate level of adjustment across all dimensions. This suggests that they perceive themselves as capable of effectively responding mentally and behaviorally to academic, social, and personal-emotional demands while maintaining attachment to the faculty and university. Nevertheless, there are still participants who exhibit low levels of academic, social, personal-emotional adjustment,

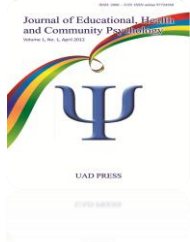


and institutional attachment (13.64% in academic adjustment, 14.77% in social adjustment, 16.67% in personal-emotional adjustment, and 15.53% in institutional attachment). These findings indicate that some second-year students perceive their mental and behavioral responses as insufficient to meet academic, social, and personal-emotional demands, and they lack attachment to the faculty and university. It is important to note that high levels of academic, social, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment are associated with better academic achievement, increased involvement in campus activities, improved mental health, and higher institutional satisfaction (Hurtado, Carter & Spuler, 1996; Baker, 2002; Olasupo, Idemudia, & Dimatkakso, 2018; Feldt, Graham, & Dew, 2011).

The results of this study indicate a significant relationship between assertiveness and academic, social, personal-emotional adjustment, as well as institutional attachment among second-year students in the Psychology Faculty, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The descriptive statistical analysis reveals that a considerable number of students still exhibit low levels of assertiveness, academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. Therefore, to support the adjustment process of second-year students in higher education, the Psychology Faculty of SWCU should implement programs aimed at enhancing student assertiveness, thereby facilitating improved adjustment to the university environment.

Limitation

This study has several limitations. Firstly, it is limited to a specific group of participants from the same faculty and university, utilizing a non-probability sampling technique, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other populations. Future research should aim to include a more diverse and representative sample. Additionally, assertiveness is influenced by individual culture and ethnicity (Parham et al., 2015), but this study did not consider the participants' cultural backgrounds in the statistical analysis. The data only reflect the participants' areas of origin and do not explore their cultural influences. Therefore, further research should investigate the relationship between participants' culture and their assertiveness and adjustment in higher education.



Conclusion

In conclusion, college students' adjustment is an ongoing process, and second-year students face distinct challenges compared to first-year students. Unfortunately, faculties and universities often overlook the specific needs of second-year students during the adjustment process. Effective communication skills, such as assertiveness, play a significant role in facilitating the adjustment of second-year students, as evidenced by the findings that assertiveness is significantly correlated with academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. Given this relationship, faculties and universities should develop targeted programs to enhance students' assertiveness skills and support their adjustment process.

Future research should focus on developing interventions to improve students' assertiveness and evaluate their effectiveness in enhancing adjustment to higher education. Longitudinal studies are also needed to examine the progress of students' adjustment throughout their university experience, particularly for those who underwent the first-year process during the pandemic. Additionally, researchers should consider investigating other variables that may predict students' adjustment in higher education, such as academic hardiness, locus of control, optimism, emotional intelligence, and resilience. Moreover, incorporating participants' cultural backgrounds into future studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between culture, assertiveness, and adjustment in higher education.

Acknowledgement

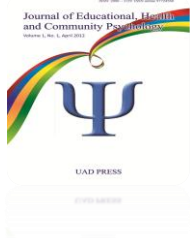
This study was funded by the Satya Wacana Christian University (SWCU) Internal Fund Lecturer Research Grant for the 2022 Fiscal Year, based on Rector's Decree No. 238/Penel/Rek/7/V/2022 regarding SWCU Lecturer Research Tasks.

References

- Alberti, R. & Emmons, M. (2017). *Your perfect right: assertiveness and equality in your life and relationships*. 10th ed. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.
- Anderson, J. R. & Guan, Y. (2017). Implicit acculturation and the academic adjustment of China sojourners in Australia. *Australian Psychologist*, November (2017), 1-10.
- Azhari, M. A. S., Mayangsari, M. D., & Erlyani, N. (2015). Hubungan perilaku asertif dengan penyesuaian diri pada siswa tahun pertama di SMP. *Jurnal Ecopsy*, 2(1), 20-25.
- Baker, R. W. & Siryk, B. (1984). Measuring adjustment to college. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 31, 179-189.
- Baker, R. W. (2002). *Research with the student adaptation to college questionnaire (SACQ)*. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/shilkret/baker/BakerSACQ.MS.doc>
- Cage, E., Jones, E., Ryan, G., Hughes, G., & Spanner, L. (2021). Student mental health and transitions into, through and out of university: student and staff perspectives. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, DOI: 10.1080/0309877X.2021.1875203.
- Ceyhan, A. A. (2006). An investigation of adjustment levels of Turkish university students with respect to perceived communication skill levels. *Social Behavior and Personality: An international journal*, 34(4), 367-380. <https://www.sbp-journal.com/index.php/sbp/article/view/1481>
- Cliniciu, A. I. & Cazan, A. (2013). Academic Adjustment Questionnaire for the University Students. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 127, 655-660.
- Dawborn-Gundlach, M. & Margetts, K. (2018). Social Adjustment and Transition to University for Mature-age, Undergraduate Students. *Journal of Education and Social Policy*, 5(1), 88-96.
- Feldt, R. C., Graham, M., & Dew, D. (2011). Measuring Adjustment to College: Construct Validity of the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, 44(2), 92-104
- Fernandez, M. F. P., Araujo, A. M., Vacas, C. T., Almeida, L. S., & Gonzales, M. S. R. (2017). Predictors of Students' Adjustment During Transition to University in Spain. *Psicothema*, 29, (1), 67-72.
- Gaumer Erickson, A. S., Noonan, P. M., Monroe, K., & McCall, Z. (2016). Assertiveness formative questionnaire. In P. Noonan & A. Gaumer Erickson. *The skills that matter: Teaching interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies in any classroom* (p. 181–182). Corwin.
- Gavinta, D. A. P. & Hartati, S. (2015). Asertivitas dan Penyesuaian Diri pada Mahasiswa Tahun Pertama Fakultas Kedokteran. *Jurnal Empati*, 4(4), 139-143.

- Ghodrati, F., Tavakoli, P., Heydari, N., & Akbarzadeh, M. (2016). Investigating the relationship between self-esteem, assertiveness and academic achievement in female high school students. *Health Science Journal*, 10(4), 1-5.
- Gold, J., Burrell, S., Haynes, C., & Nardecchia, D. (1990). *Student Adaptation to College as a Predictor of Academic Success: An Exploratory Study of Black Undergraduate Education Students*. (Research Report 143). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 331 946.)
- Greene, J. O. (2010). Communication skills. In Harry T. Reis & Susan Spencer (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Human Relationships Volume 1*. California: Sage Publication, Inc. Hlm. 272-276.
- Gultekin, A., Ozdemir, A. A., & Budak, F. (2018). The effect of assertiveness education on communication skills given to nursing students. *International Journal of Caring Science*, 11 (1), 395-401.
- Hurtado, S., Carter, D.F., Spuler, A. (1996). Latino student transition to college: Assessing difficulties and factors in successful college adjustment. *Research in Higher Education*, 37(2), 135-157.
- Indraswari, D.A., Irtadji, M., & Dwiastuti, I. (2017). Efektivitas assertiveness training untuk siswa Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP). *Jurnal Ilmu Perilaku*, 1(2), 81-97.
- Johnson, D. M., Shoulders, C. W., Edgar, L. D., & Dixon, B. L. (2018). Predictors of freshman to sophomore retention in a college of agricultural, food, and life sciences. *NACTA Journal*. 62(3), 218-224.
- Karahan, T. F. (2005). The effect of communication and conflict resolution skill training program on the assertiveness level of university students. *Uludağ University, Journal of Faculty of Education*, 18(2), 217-230.
- Kirst, L. K. (2011). Investigating the relationship between assertiveness and personality characteristics. *Thesis*. University of Central Florida.
- Lange, A., & Jakubowski, P. (1976). *Responsible assertive behavior: Cognitive/behavioral procedures for trainers*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Lee, J.-y., & Ciftci, A. (2014). Asian international students' socio-cultural adaptation: Influence of multicultural personality, assertiveness, academic self-efficacy, and social support. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 38, 97–105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2013.08.009>
- Mutambara J. & Bhebe V. (2012). An analysis of the factors affecting students` adjustment at a University in Zimbabwe. *Journal of International Education Studies*, 5(6), 244-250.
- Moon, J. (2009). *Achieving success through academic assertiveness: real-life strategies for today's higher education students*. New York: Routledge.

- Olasupo, M., Idemudia, E. S. & Dimatkakso, M. (2018). Adjustment, psychological well-being and mental health of first-year students in a South African University. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 20(1), 55-68.
- Orr, K. S. (2003). College students' comfort with assertive behaviors: An analysis of students with and without disabilities in three different postsecondary institutions. *Doctoral dissertation*, Texas A&M University. Texas A&M University. Available electronically from <https://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/handle/1969.1/71>
- Parham, J. B., Lewis, C. C., Fretwell, C. E., Irwin, J. G., & Schrimsher, M. R. (2015). Influences on assertiveness: Gender, national culture, and ethnicity. *Journal of Management Development*, 34(4), 421-439. DOI: 10.1108/JMD-09-2013-0113
- Parmaksiz, I. (2019). Assertiveness as the predictor of adjustment to university life amongst university students. *International Journal of Instruction*, 12(4), 131-148.
- Parray, W. M. & Kumar, S. (2016). Assertiveness among undergraduate students of the university. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 4(1), 283-291.
- Peneva, I. & Mavrodiev, S. (2013). A historical approach to assertiveness. *Psychological Thought*, 6(1), 3-26. DOI: 10.5964/psyct.v6i1.14
- Pfafman, T. (2017). Assertiveness. In V. Zeigler-Hill & T. K. Shackelford (eds.). *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences*, Pp. 1-7. DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-28099-8_1044-1
- Pourjali, F. & Zarnaghash, M. (2010). Relationship between assertiveness and the power of saying no with mental health among undergraduate students. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 9, 137-141.
- Rahayu, M. N. M. & Arianti, R. (2020). Penyesuaian mahasiswa tahun pertama di perguruan tinggi: Studi pada mahasiswa Fakultas Psikologi UKSW. *Jurnal Psikologi Sains dan Profesi*, 4(2), 73-84.
- Rini., Bahri, S., & Zuliani, H. (2016). Kontribusi perilaku asertif remaja terhadap penyesuaian sosial: Suatu penelitian di MAN Kota Banda Aceh. *Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Bimbingan dan Konseling FKIP Unsyiah*, 1(1), 13-27.
- Rohmah, S. D. B. (2019). Hubungan antara asertivitas dengan penyesuaian diri pada mahasiswa tahun pertama. *Skripsi* (tidak dipublikasikan). Surakarta: Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta
- Salmain, D., Azar, N. N., & Salmani, A. (2014). A study of first-year student adjustment to college in relation to academic-self efficacy, academic motivation and satisfaction with college environment. *International Journal of Scientific Management and Development*, 2(5), 87-93.



- Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E. & McDaniel, E. R. (2017). *Intercultural communication. 13th edition*. Boston: Cengage Learning.
- Sarkova, M., Bacikova-Sleskova, M., Orosova, O., Geckova, A. M., Katreniakova, Z., Klein, D., van den Heuvel, W., & van Dijk, J. P. (2013). Association between assertiveness, psychological well-being, and self-esteem in adolescents. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 43*, 147-154.
- Schaller, M. A. (2010). Understanding the impact of the second year of college. In Mary Stuart Hunter, Barbara F. Tobolowsky, John N. Gardner (Eds). *Helping Sophomores Succeed. Understanding and improving the Second-Year Experience*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, 13-29.
- Schober, P., Boer, C., & Schwarte, L. A. (2018). Correlation coefficients: Appropriate use and interpretation. *International Anesthesia Research Society, 126(5)*, 1763-1768. DOI: 10.1213/ANE.0000000000002864
- Sanchez-Leguelinel, C. (2008). Supporting “slumping” sophomores: programmatic peer initiatives designed to enhance retention in the crucial second year of college. *College Student Journal, 42(2)*, 637-646.
- Simarmata, E. R. & Rahayu, A. (2018). Correlation between assertiveness and empathy with adolescent’s social adjustment in social home of South Jakarta. *Conference paper: Universitas Indonesia International Psychology Symposium for Undergraduate Research 2017*. DOI: 10.2991/uipSUR-17.2018.23.
- Sitota, G. (2018). Assertiveness and academic achievement motivation of adolescent students in selected secondary schools of Harari Peoples Regional State, Ethiopia. *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies, 6(4)*, 40-46.
- Sterling, A. J. (2018). Student experiences in the second year: advancing strategies for success beyond the first year of college. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly, 5(4)*, 136-149, DOI:10.1002/sem3.20113
- Thurber, C. A. & Walton, E. A. (2012). Homesickness and adjustment in university students. *Journal of American College Health, 60(5)*, DOI: 10.1080/07448481.2012.673520.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition (2nd ed.)*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226922461.001.0001>
- Wood, J. T. (2010). Communication, gender differences in. In Harry T. Reis & Susan Spencer (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Human Relationships Volume 1*. California: Sage Publication, Inc. Hlm. 252-256.