ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT DIFFICULTIES AMONG COLLEGE FRESHMEN

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ABSTRACT

Academic achievements as reflected in the General Weighted Averages (GWAs) of 329 college freshmen were correlated with their scores in the Academic Adjustment Difficulties (AAD) domain of the College Freshmen Adjustment Difficulties Inventory (CFADI). This was done to see if relationship exists between GWAs and scores in the said domain of CFADI. GWA is the average of grades in all subjects taken, whether passed or failed and serves as an indicator of students' academic achievement in a given school year. It is reflected in the fourth year high school report cards of college freshmen. On the other hand, the CFADI is a researcher-developed inventory. The inventory has been initially proven valid (as reviewed by Registered Guidance Counselors and item factor loadings ranging from 0.401 to 0.743 based on the 0.40 cutoff for screening of items) and reliable (Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.984 indicating high internal consistency). Specifically, the AAD domain of CFADI has 24 items (Cronbach's Alpha value= 0.964). Statistical analysis showed that there was a significant negative relationship between GWAs and scores in the AAD domain of CFADI (r= -0.380) and was significant at the 0.01 level.

Keywords: Academic achievement, academic adjustment difficulties, college freshmen, General Weighted Averages

Introduction:

Attending college is a life-changing experience. It includes meeting new people and doing something novel. It is a time to discover courses and majors one never knew existed. The first year in college, academically speaking, presents wonderful opportunities to know different academic disciplines (Hartman & Stewart, 2006). But since college is very different from high school, college freshmen may experience a lot of changes that can lead to problems. In relation to these changes, Cunningham (2008) believes that the most critical of all changes required for successful adjustment from high school to college is academic differences. While Adler, Raju, Beveridge, Wang, Zhu and Zimmermann (2008) assumes that "adjustment to college is critical for academic success. Poor college adjustment correlates with poor academic performance, low graduation rates, and poor success later in life" (p.1281).

Among college freshmen, one parameter that can be looked into that can be used to predict academic adjustment difficulties in college are their academic achievements as reflected in their fourth year high school report cards. Paying close attention to academic achievement is important. "Academic achievement has been one of the most important goals of the educational process" (Nuthanap, 2007, p.6) because it plays a significant role in assuring quality (Ali, Jusoff, Ali, Mokhtar & Salamat, 2009).

In high school, like in the case of the Philippines, academic achievement is measured with the use of General Weighted Averages (GWAs). GWA is the average of grades in all subjects taken, whether passed or failed and serves as an indicator of students' academic achievement in a given school year. GWA is reflected in the report cards of high school students.

Establishing the possible relationship between academic achievement in high school and academic adjustment difficulties as college freshmen is important. Accordingly, Feldman and Newcomb (1994) suggest that "the amount of difficulty and the nature of the adjustments during the early college months depend on the particular background and personality characteristics" (p. 90). Academic achievement in high school, particularly during fourth year, tells so much about students' background and personality characteristics.

In the end, findings from this study could serve as bases for instituting programs with the aim of helping college freshmen have better high school to college transition and eventually be successful as college students.

Method:

The study was conducted in a state college with 329 college freshmen as participants. Two variables were correlated in this study. These were academic achievements as reflected in the GWAs in the high school report cards (fourth year) of college freshmen and academic adjustment difficulties as reflected in their scores in Academic Adjustment Difficulties (ADD) domain of the College Freshmen Adjustment Difficulties Inventory (CFADI).

As stated above, GWAs are indicated in the high school report cards of the college freshmen. Fourth year high school report cards are one of the college admission requirements. GWAs are recorded upon successful admission. GWA is the average of grades in all subjects taken, whether passed or failed and serves as an indicator of students' academic achievement in a given school year.

On the other hand, the CFADI is a researcher-developed inventory. The inventory has been initially proven valid (as reviewed by Registered Guidance Counselors and item factor loadings ranging from 0.401 to 0.743 based on the 0.40 cut-off for screening of items) and reliable (Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.984 indicating high internal consistency). CFADI has four domains. Of particular importance in this study is the AAD domain of the CFADI. The ADD domain of CFADI has 24 items (Cronbach's Alpha value= 0.964). The CFADI was administered to college freshmen before the end of the First Semester, School Year 2010-2011.

To test the relationship between academic achievement and academic adjustment difficulties, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PMCC) was used. The PMCC is typically denoted by "r," and is a measure of the underlined correlation (linear dependence) between two variables (Rodgers & Nicewander, 1988).

Results:

The correlation between GWAs and academic adjustment difficulties is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlation between GWAs and Academic Adjustment Difficulties

	N	M	SD	r-value	p-value
GWAs (Academic Achievement)	329	83.46	4.10	-0.380(**)	0. 000
Academic Adjustment Difficulties	329	63.30	15.55		

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

As presented in Table 1, there was a significant negative correlation between GWAs and academic adjustment difficulties and was significant at the 0.01 level. A significant negative correlation meant that there was a strong relationship between the two variables, but in the opposite direction. This meant that as the GWAs of the college freshmen increases, their scores in the AAD domain of CFADI decreases and vice-versa.

Discussion:

Students are subjected to different kinds of stressors (Shaikh et al., 2004) and experiences series of adjustments (Raju & Rahantulla, 2007). This is especially true in the case of college freshmen. So in order to improve graduation rates, increase attention must be given to the retention of college freshmen (Ross & Hammer, 2002). Giving due attention to college freshmen is of bearing because retention and attrition are major issues in higher education (Angelino, Williams & Natvig, 2007; Ross & Hammer, 2002).

In relation, Ross and Hammer (2002) asserts that that there are several variables linked to the retention of college freshmen and academic achievement is one of them. Relatively, "most studies have found that high school grades are the best predictors of college GPAs" (www.tamu-commerce.edu., n.d., para.5). Therefore, those with high school grades are also expected to have high General Point Averages (GPAs) when already in college. Similarly, ACT (2007) asserts that prior academic achievement (high school) is one of the strongest predictors of college persistence and degree attainment while Harbaugh (2001) upholds that academic achievement is correlated with career success. Therefore, giving due significance to academic achievement is of equal importance.

For Abdullah, Elias, Mahyuddin and Uli (2009) academic adjustment plays an important role in college retention and success. The significant negative correlation between academic achievement and academic adjustment difficulties only show that GWAs could give insights as to how college freshmen would adjust academically. And as the results of this study suggest, college freshmen who have high academic achievement as reflected in their GWAs in fourth year high school reported lesser academic adjustment difficulties.

The results of this study only suggest that help can be extended and it can be extended even before the actual need arises. It can be given at the earliest time possible with the aim of ensuring that academic adjustment difficulties are lessened. Looking for the possible causes of adjustments before it even occur is always better that finding remedies later. Programs and interventions can be designed by looking at GWAs since GWAs can serve as predictors, as the results of the study suggest, of academic adjustment difficulties in college. Intervention programs like orientations, transition

activities, and remedial activities must be tailored with college freshmen's GWAs in fourth year high school as one of the bases. Omoteso (2006) and Abdullah, Elias, Uli and Mahyuddin (2010) also recommends the use of intervention programs to promote healthy adjustment among college freshmen.

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