

A Study on the Adaptability of Students under Academic Probation to University Life

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze the difficulties encountered in academic achievement and adjustment to university life for students on academic probation and to discover the support universities should be provided students. This study was conducted on 203 students who answered a questionnaire among 295 students who received an academic warning (grade point average of less than 1.5) in the first semester of 2015 among N university students. The survey was conducted by online questionnaires. The survey period was from April 30, 2016, to May 6, 2016. The results of this study showed that students who received an academic warning had higher than average university and majors satisfaction, were not considering transferring, retaking classes or changing majors, and difficulty in academic and social adjustment.

Keywords: *Academic probation, University and major satisfaction, University life adjustment, Academic difficulty*

1. Introduction

The university freshmen students have to adapt from the passive and uniform learning culture of high school to one that demands autonomy at university, and students have the task of adjusting to this new academic and social culture vastly different from their secondary schooling [1,2]. Due to the two responsibilities of being psychologically independent of one's parents and adapting to their new university life, during the period of being a freshman in university, students experience a change in the quality of life and this can be referred to as a 'critical period'. Therefore, it is very important for students who enter university to successfully adapt to college life. Students who adapt well to university life can enjoy a stable school life, yet students who do not adjust well experience psychological distress. Especially in the early stage of university entrance, the overall adaptation threats are very high [3]. Successful academic learning is an important and large component in adjusting to university life. This is because many students who enter university after overcoming fierce competition in the entrance examinations often fail to adapt to the autonomous academic university life and receive an academic warning. These students are likely to take a leave of absence which often leads to dropping out of their studies causing a loss of self-esteem, which often leads to confusion in their future career choice and poor management in interpersonal relationships. This is a very unfortunate phenomenon not only in terms of the individual students but also at

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a national level of human resource development. In recent years, the proportion of academic work required by universities has been increasing, and so the proportion of academic work in successful adjustment to college life is also increasing. As a result, the burden on college students is increasing, and the number of students who withdraw or are expelled due to this burden is increasing.

Therefore, universities need to provide diverse and systematic support so that all students entering college after overcoming intense admissions competition will be able to adapt to their studies and improve their academic achievement. For this reason, universities have established programs to support the learning of students on academic probation and provide programs to enhance and strengthen their academic and learning skills [4][5][6].

However, it is only possible to provide the appropriate support strategies for students who experience academic failure when the difficulties they experience adapting to college life, especially regarding academic difficulties, are specified and analyzed. The purpose of this study is to suggest how to provide support for students to adapt to university life who have received academic probation.

2. Research method

2.1. Research targets

This study was conducted on 203 students who responded to the questionnaire among 295 students who received academic probation (grade point average of less than 1.5) in the first semester of 2015 among N university students. Surveys were conducted through online questionnaires. The survey period was from April 30, 2016, to May 6, 2016. The detailed characteristics of the research targets are presented in [Table 1].

Table 1. General characteristics of the research targets

Major	N(%)	Year	N(%)	Gender	N(%)
Engineering	73(36.0)	1	92(45.3)	Male	142(70.0)
Creative Arts	39(19.2)	2	68(33.5)	Female	61(30.0)
Business	62(30.5)	3	23(11.3)	Total	203(100.0)
Creative Arts	29(14.3)	4	20(9.9)		
Total	203(100.0)	Total	203(100.0)		

2.2. Measurement tools

First, the questions on adapting to college life from The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) developed by Baker and Siryk [7]. Based on the measured results, a factor analysis was performed among 25 questions. A principal component analysis was performed and the varimax rotation method was used as a method of rotating the factors amongst orthogonal factor rotation methods. Bartlett's sphericity test showed that the approximate chi-squared value was 3153.287 (df = 300, p = .000) and the KMO test value of standard suitability was .869 (p = .000), showing the factor analysis was appropriate.

Therefore, we extracted four factors with an eigenvalue of 1 or above, and it was found that the main factors could explain for 67.37% of the total variation. Based on the results of the rotated matrix, sub-factors of college life adaptability were renamed. Cronbach α was calculated to verify the reliability of the extracted factors.

Table 2. Factor analysis results and reliability for adaptation to college (question number of the measurement tool and reliability)

Sub-factor	Question Number	No. of Questions/Score	Reliability
Emotional Adaptation	3, 4, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 22, 24	11/55	.927
Academic Adaptation	5, 7, 15, 20, 21, 25	6/30	.627
Social Adaptation	1, 2, 14, 23	4/20	.832
Physical Adaptation	6, 10, 11, 19	4/20	.632
Total		25/125	

2.3 Analysis method

In order to analyze the difficulty of adapting to college life and academic difficulties, we conducted a cross-sectional analysis to find out whether there are any differences in individual characteristics such as gender, year, and major. Specifically, we examined whether there are differences in adapting to college life according to individual characteristics and whether there is a difference in university and major satisfaction, intentions to transfer and change majors. The data was analyzed using SPSS 22.0 statistics software.

3. Analysis results

3.1. Satisfaction and adaptability of university life

3.1.1. Satisfaction levels of university and major and intentions to change majors or transfer

The differences in university and major satisfaction by students under academic probation based on gender, year, and major were analyzed (See [Table 3]) The satisfaction of university and majors was found to be above average, and it was found that there was little consideration was given to transfer or retake classes. This means that students feel attached to their colleges and majors and are satisfied with the overall quality of the university. Also, there was no difference according to gender and major, but there were differences according to year. As a result of the post-analysis, the year difference showed that the first year students had significantly higher intentions to transfer or retake classes than fourth year students. These results are in contrast to studies, which reported that students who experienced academic probation did not feel interest and value of their studies, and motivation for learning was very low due to frequent absences [8].

Table 3. Satisfaction levels of university and major and intentions to change majors or transfer

Category		N	University Satisfaction	Intention to Transfer or Reenroll	Major Satisfaction	Intention to Change Major
			M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Gender	Male	142	3.31 (.95)	2.00 (.95)	3.25 (.98)	2.17 (1.04)
	Female	61	3.13 (1.02)	2.20 (1.09)	3.15 (1.03)	2.18 (1.07)
	X ²			1.197	-1.289	.651
Year	1	92	3.29 (.99)	2.23 (1.03)	3.23 (1.08)	2.39 (1.10)
	2	68	3.25 (1.03)	2.04 (.94)	3.21 (.96)	2.18 (1.04)
	3	23	3.17 (1.03)	2.04 (1.11)	3.09 (.95)	1.78 (.80)
	4	20	3.20 (.70)	1.35 (.59)	3.35 (.75)	1.60 (.75)
	X ²			.349	12.710**	.763
Major	Engineering	73	3.32 (1.00)	1.99 (1.06)	3.25 (.98)	2.12 (1.03)
	Creative Arts	39	3.31 (1.00)	2.21 (.95_)	3.33 (1.01)	2.13 (.95)
	Business	62	3.29 (.98)	2.03 (.94)	3.21 (1.03)	2.18 (1.05)
	Humanities & Health Science	29	3.00 (.87)	2.10 (1.05)	3.00 (.93)	2.34 (1.23)
	X ²			2.879	1.320	1.961
Total		203	3.26 (.98)	2.06 (1.00)	3.21 (.99)	2.17 (1.05)

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

3.1.2 Level of adaptation to university life by students under academic probation: The differences in adaptability to university life by students under academic probation based on gender, year, and major were analyzed (See [Table 4]) Academic adaptation was the lowest followed by social adaptation, both of which were below average. A low level of academic adaptation means that motivation for studying, responding to academic demands, general satisfaction with the learning environment, time management, and a sense of having clear goals are low. In addition, the low level of social adaptation means that the ability to form, maintain and manage relationships with peers in college; relationships with younger and older students, and professors and the ability to communicate effectively in these relationships are low. On the other hand, emotional adaptation was the highest followed by physical adaptation. The results were slightly above average. This means that the psychological and emotional reactions and the physically manifest reactions in the process of discovering themselves and forming values through self-exploration are high. In particular, emotional adaptation and physical adjustment were significantly lower in female students than male students.

Table 4. Level of adaptability of students under academic probation

Category		N	Emotional Adaptation	Academic Adaptation	Social Adaptation	Physical Adaptation	Total
			M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Gender	Male	142	3.33 (.71)	2.74 (.51)	3.06 (.79)	3.12 (.57)	3.11 (.46)
	Female	61	3.11 (.65)	2.65 (.58)	2.86 (.74)	2.95 (.57)	2.93 (.47)
	X ²			2.070*	.398	1.723	1.277*
Year	1	92	3.32 (.70)	2.75 (.56)	3.03 (.82)	3.04 (.55)	3.09 (.51)
	2	68	3.25 (.69)	2.71 (.54)	3.01 (.74)	3.11 (.64)	3.06 (.42)
	3	23	3.16 (.70)	2.51 (.56)	2.83 (.79)	2.97 (.56)	2.92 (.49)
	4	20	3.17 (.76)	2.81 (.31)	3.03 (.76)	3.19 (.51)	3.06 (.44)
	X ²			.684	1.201	.805	.738
Major	Engineering	73	3.42 (.79)	2.71 (.54)	3.08 (.84)	3.14 (.66)	3.15 (.51)
	Creative Arts	39	3.06 (.55)	2.71 (.55)	3.08 (.71)	3.09 (.43)	2.98 (.44)
	Business	62	3.20 (.63)	2.73 (.51)	2.95 (.73)	3.02 (.55)	3.02 (.45)
	Humanities & Health Science	29	3.28 (.71)	2.70 (.57)	2.81 (.81)	2.95 (.57)	3.01 (.45)
	X ²			3.632	.037	1.937	.966
Total		203	3.26 (.70)	2.71 (.53)	3.00 (.78)	3.07 (.58)	3.06 (.47)

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

4. Conclusions

It was found that students who received academic probation had above average satisfaction for their university and majors and lower numbers of these students were not considering transferring, retaking classes or changing majors. In addition, when examining adaptation to university life of students under academic probation, academic adaptation was the lowest followed by social adaptation; both these areas were shown to be below average. Also, emotional adaptation was the highest followed by physical adaptation was the next. When viewed in light of academic difficulties, students under academic probation spend less time in preparation, reviewing, and completing assignments, with a lack of basic knowledge of their majors and lack of time management skills can be seen as the main causes of receiving academic probation.

Thus, each university needs to provide a time management program for students and provide learning communities to help increase their average study time. In addition, it is necessary to provide personalized programs for each major to help overcome the lack of basic knowledge pertaining to one's major. Therefore, the direction of the time management programs, the learning communities, and the personalized programs of foundational knowledge

for majors should not be aimed at change at the cognitive level through the one-time lectures, but should lead to a change in learning by being continued by mentoring, continuous counseling by advisors.

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