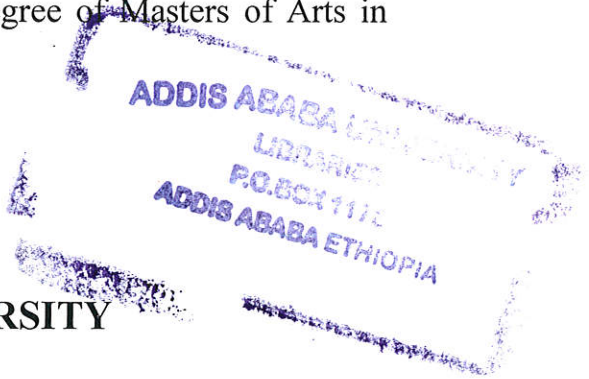


**ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS
OF FIRST YEAR MADAWALABU
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

**BY
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A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Educational Research and Development



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate academic adjustment problems of first year Madawalabu University students. The study was conducted on 217 (49 female and 168 male) first year undergraduate students and six informants (four faculty deans, registrar officer, and health/clinic officer) who were purposely selected. Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) and interview guide were used to collect data from participants. The data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The results of the study revealed that psychosocial adjustment and institutional/goal commitment jointly accounted for 40% of the variance in students' academic adjustment. However, the sole contribution of social influence was higher (27%) than other variables. Results from interviews and open ended question showed institutional related factors like problems of facilities/services, educational resources, and students' lack of readiness, discrepancy between their expectations, etc. are adversely affecting students' academic adjustment. On the other hand, majorities of the students were with moderate level of academic adjustment and male students were better adjusted than female students. One-way ANOVA revealed that statistically significant mean difference in students' academic adjustment between faculties/schools was not found. In conclusion, first year students' academic adjustment problems were resulted from psychosocial problems, students' lack of institutional/goal commitment, problems related to university facilities, limited educational resources and some students' related problems.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The concept of adjustment in relation to college or university encompasses students' academic achievement and their personal growth or social adequacy. In this approach adjustment as reflected by academic achievement, entails the individual showing satisfactory academic progress whereas, social adequacy implies the ability to establish satisfactory relationship with teacher and classmate. When we combine the two aspects of adjustment, adjustment could be viewed as the ability to learn, to maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers, experiencing a happy mood and the absence of physical symptoms such as pain or fear associated with person or school problems. An adjusted student is therefore, the one who obtain adequate grade, passes in his or her courses, and eventually graduates (Arkoff as cited in Abdullah, Elias, Mahyuddin, & Uli, 2009).

In Ethiopia since the introduction of new educational training policy in 1994, the number of private colleges and public universities were dramatically increased. Following this, the yearly public universities' admission rates have correspondingly increased. However, irrespective of the increment enrollment rates, attrition rate in almost all public universities is increasing (Aboma, 2009). This issue is highly related with students' adjustment problems to overall university environments and academic works in particular. Especially, newly admitted students to universities or colleges face many new challenges concerning social and academic adjustment (Rausch & Hamilton, 2006). Whether a student is young or old, extremely clever or not so clever, articulate or lost for

words, the issues of adjustment at the beginning are the same. Students need to leave behind what has gone before and to look forward to what is to come. They need to become attached to the institution and to their academic works; to make friends and to form a working relationship with those who will teach them (Bell, 1996).

On the other hand, the first year in university is a critical transition period; and students require special attention. Why do first year undergraduate students require special attention is that, a number of things are going on in these students' lives during their first year. They are not only developing academically and intellectually, they are also establishing and maintaining personal relationships, developing an identity, deciding about career and lifestyle, maintaining personal health and wellness, and developing an integrated philosophy of life (Ambrose, 2002: 2). In addition to this, the first year is the year in which incoming students make decisions either to stay or to leave the university and is the time where the foundations for effective learning are not established and where, by extension, the potential to returns to institutional investment in students adjustment and learning are likely to be greatest (Tinto, 2006). Thus, first year students require to successfully adjusting themselves to various academic and behavioral expectations so as to realize a greater academic adjustment (Tinto as cited in Waller, 2009).

However, studies on the students' retention and adjustment have reported that the transition to university can be stressful experiences for many new undergraduate students (Cantor et al., and Perry et al., as cited in Abdullah et al., 2009). It involves daunting social, emotional, and academic adjustments including new relationships, self-organization of course work and preparation for examinations (Kenny & Rice, 1995). Especially, students who are living away from home for the first time and living in

university residence may experience homesickness, inability to take responsibility for themselves and making new friendships (Smith & Wertlieb, 2005). They also show adjustment problems because of academic difficulties, adjustment difficulties, new goals, financial inadequacies, discrepancy between students' expectation and the institution's capacity, and isolation (Tinto as cited in Abdullah et al., 2009).

Further, Paul and Brier (2001) also found out that separation from parents, management of the anxiety being alone, and making independent decision were the biggest problems faced by new students. The authors suggested that starting life at university is, for many students; a major social network confusion. Although new friendships are made, those old ones will never be the same, and distress is felt in the form of loss. Resulting from this state of friend sickness are feeling of the loneliness, homesick, a decreased sense of competency as a friend, an inability to make and retain trustworthy friends, and distress as a result of unrealistic expectation of the transition phase. This can be a huge testing period for the first year students as they come to adjust with their new social and academic position.

Many of the first year students enter university with variety of family backgrounds, educational experiences, and individual attributes. These factors could adversely affect their educational and institutional commitment (Recchini, 2005). Although these factors influence their adjustment to college, the impact of these predispositions factors depend on the quality of the students' interaction with other member of university communities (Tinto as cited in Bernier, Larose, & Soucy, 2005). This is also related to students' university experiences which affect their adjustment far more than their background characteristics (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996). Moreover, with regard to family

background educational level and socioeconomic status have high influence on students' academic adjustment. Students' dropouts are directly related to the socioeconomic status of the family. In addition, young female students were highly influenced by their mother's education level whereas, male students by father's education (Eksotrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986).

Furthermore, possibly almost all students are concerned that the style and pace of teaching and learning is different from that experienced at high school. The large amount of the volume of reading that has to be completed in a relatively short time overwhelmed them. Those students do not know to whom they to turn or where to go for advice, and assistance feel unsupported and lost (Kowalski, 1977). As Yalaw (2003), states this is because of the lack of information, guidance and counseling services, poor food and health facilities, and problem of potable water that can attribute to attrition. In addition, as this individual stated, students reported that their results could be significantly affected if institution assigns them to their field of study.

On the other side, the research on the nature of university undergraduate students' academic adjustment problems and the influence of selected socio-demographic variables of peer status, gender, age and family background on the students' academic adjustment find out the following academic problems of the students. These are, inability to get suitable place to study, difficult in understanding the recommended text books, absence of adequate educational resources (library, laboratory, classrooms, text books, etc.), vastness of the given work (assignments, home works and project works), having to move from one lecture room to another and the strictness of the university (Omoteso, 2006).

As Cole and Chan cited in Amare (2001), especially academic adjustment is influenced by students' own perceptions of themselves, which is closely related to academic performance. The higher students' achievement, the more likely students are evaluating themselves as being competent. Academic competence also influences the way students feel about their likelihood of success in academic tasks to be more confident of success and therefore, are willing to prefer challenge, be curious and engage in independent mastery attempt. On the other hand, this issue is related to students' internal and external factors. Internal factors concerns such points as student's level of commitment to exert the time and the energy required stand the rigor of academic work at their tertiary level and his or her academic readiness for college or university education prior to the enrollment in certain field of study. External factors include such issues as support students receive from parents, friends within the educational institutions (Solomon, 2005).

In short, different literatures on the prediction of academic success and retention among first year university students also showed that, most students, despite of the academic, social, emotional, and other challenges, successfully complete the transition period and achieve academic success. However, others do not manage these challenges, and forced to leave their studies at early stage of campus life that may be exposed to various psychosocial problems (Aboma, 2009). Similarly, first year Madawalabu University students faced academic adjustment problems as others did. Therefore, academic adjustment problems among first year students were identified as problems that could lead students to discontinue their studies.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Madawalabu University is a newly established university and many of its institutional facilities (residential, accommodation, library, laboratory, etc.) were not sufficiently fulfilled. These were challenging and seem confusing for many first year students who joined the university. The university is to produce knowledgeable, skillful and competent citizen. However, several factors may reduce the expected aim of the university. Of these problems students' academic adjustment is a major problem that did not given due attention. As studies showed, especially academic adjustment problems is the serious problems that first year university students faced (Wilson, 1984; & Hurtado et al., 1996). Many of them faced adjustment difficulties, especially during the first few weeks of the first semester (and even longer for some students). This is not only because of the new challenges that students could faced, but also their old strategies do not work and new support systems are unfamiliar (Ambrose, 2002).

Even though there were no written documents concerning the issue in Madawalabu University, I have observed so many problems when I was teaching there for a year. For example, some students have a problem of taking lecture notes; some have difficulty of doing individual assignment. In addition, many students visited counseling center for help and even some of them came to my office for help. As Yalew (2003) identified, lack of institutional supports such as library services, academic advising, tutorials, study groups and supplemental instruction can be major causes affecting students' adjustment. As Tinto cited in Abdullah et al. (2009), about 57% of first year students leave the college

To this end, the researcher raised the following basic research questions:

1. To what extent does psychological adjustment influences students' academic adjustment?
2. To what extent does social adjustment affects students' academic adjustment?
3. How do institutional factors affect first year students' academic adjustment?
4. To what extent do first year students adjust themselves academically?
5. Is there a significant difference between male and female students in academic adjustment?
6. Is there a significant difference among students of different faculties/schools in academic adjustment?

1.4. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study can have the following contributions.

- ❖ It will help students to understand the extent to which different factors can affect their academic adjustment and then develop a better adjustment ways accordingly.
- ❖ Educational decision makers and instructors may use the results to bring effective learning-teaching process in higher educations.
- ❖ Different professionals like counselors, social works may use the results to assist higher institution students in general and new comer students in particular.
- ❖ It may provide key information to the university administrators to have more aware of the factors that can affect students' academic adjustment and provide appropriate services and programs.

- ❖ It may present possible adjustment method or alternative solution that might help students to handle the problems, which they can face while performing their academic activities.
- ❖ It may open the door for further researchers.

1.5. Delimitation of the Study

This study is focused on first year (2010/2011 entry) of Madawalabu University students mainly to make manageable and within the capacity of the researcher's financial, material and time resources. The study also limited to one dependent variable (academic adjustment), and three independent variables (psychological adjustment, social adjustment, and institutional/goal commitment) with some demographic variables and institutional related factors.

1.6. Limitation of the Study

The two-stage cluster sampling technique may not be convenient to identify those students with academic adjustment problems. It is difficult to conclude that adjustment problems are solely caused by those variables considered in this study. Although one open question was used, the participants could respond to the items in the self-measure of students that were predetermined by researcher not on the basis of what they really feel and may restrict their responses. The current study is a cross sectional study where the data were collected from the participants simultaneously for a period of time to investigate academic adjustment problems of students which limited the researcher observation of those students who adjusted successfully in the following semesters.

1.7. Operational Definition of Terms

Adjustment is the assumption that the overall college/university experiences are complex, involving demands that vary in kind and degree, all of which require a variety of coping strategies (Baker & Siryk, 1999).

Academic adjustment is the way of overcoming learning problems and instructional difficulties to maximize success.

First Year University Students are newcomer students who completed preparatory programme and joined Madawalabu University in 2010/11 academic year.

Psychological adjustment is the stability level of student's emotional feeling, and tension that could arise due to various reasons.

Social adjustment is the social success that occurred by the extent to which students interact with instructors, peers, other community of the university and their level of homesickness.

Institutional/goal commitment refers to students' degree of dedication (level of satisfaction) to attend university in general and Madawalabu University in particular and devotion to their academic work.

Institutional related factors are university's infrastructures, accommodation, and other facilities/services that students received from university.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

This chapter review relevant literature regarding first year students' academic adjustment problems. It begins with the conceptual framework of adjustment, and followed by theoretical perspective of students' academic adjustment, students' academic adjustment, psychosocial factors and institutional influences on students' academic adjustment.

2.1. Concept of Adjustment

Anderson (1994) in his study on cross-cultural adaptation defined adjustment as, the dynamic process of one's abilities to cope with various environmental challenges which can lead him/her to a better achievement. It involves ongoing learning processes, which are usually pronounced with negative experiences. These experiences are related with environment (students-faculty interaction and within themselves), and person (students' lack of confidence and homesickness) reflecting the person-environment fit perspective.

Moreover, Baker and Siryk (1999) elaborated the concept of adjustment with regard to students' academic adjustment. As they portrayed, academic adjustment involves students' acquisition of academic skills, motivation to learn, taking action to meet academic demands, having a clear sense of purpose, and academic satisfaction. Similarly, Boulter (2002) described academic adjustment as student's positive attitude toward setting academic goals, completing academic requirements, the effectiveness of their efforts to meet the requirements, and their ability to adjust to a new academic environment.

The basic assumption of adjustment is that each individual seeks to achieve and maintain his or her personal uniqueness and yet continue to cope successfully with environmental challenges. Thus, achieving and maintaining balance with environment are the basic motives of human behavior (Dawis, Lofquist, & Weiss, 1968). As to this concept, individual need to bring certain skills and knowledge to fulfill the environmental requirements so that he/she adjusted better. On the other hand, adjustment describes the fit between students and the academic environment and may include issues such as learning styles, study habits, educational background (Ramsay, Jones, & Barker, 2006).

2.2. Theoretical Perspective of Students' Academic Adjustment

2.2.1. Tinto's Model of Student Departure

Tinto's model/theory features is the most widely used and cited theoretical framework to investigate variety of issues facing higher education students, which include students' college adjustment problem, factors influence their retention, persistence, and other factors that influence either to stay or to leave their studies. For example some scholars used Tinto's theory to study the influence of pet-keeping on college student adjustment, transition experiences of minority students in predominantly white institution, campus environments and missing link in studies of community college attrition, first year college student persistence (Kist, 2009; Schuetz, 2005; Gonzales, & LaBoone, 2006).

This theory is widely used to explain individual student departure from college by addressing social and academic aspects of the students. The term 'departure' is used in the title of Tinto's model to describe students' inability to meet academic demands and persistence in college (Kist, 2009). As Kist described, the model used multiple factors that

influence students' departure from or adjustment to college/university. Thus, the model provides framework for the current study in that it takes into account multiple explanations and its holistic nature in dealing with university students characteristics.

In addition, Tinto's theory/model is used by several scholars to investigate the experiences of transition students and their interaction with faculty, campus relationships, and overall satisfaction. According to this theory, students must first separate themselves from previous communities including the family, the local communities, high school and local areas of residences before starting their college life. Tinto believed that, such separation allows for the adaption of values and norms congruent with college life and facilitates better social and academic engagements, which are significant for students' graduation goals (Tinto as cited in McCormick, Sarraf, Lorenz, & Haywood, 2009). However, this may be difficult for first year students because their previous school experiences may not prepare them for the new campus life and may not facilitate integration in the same way it does for new students.

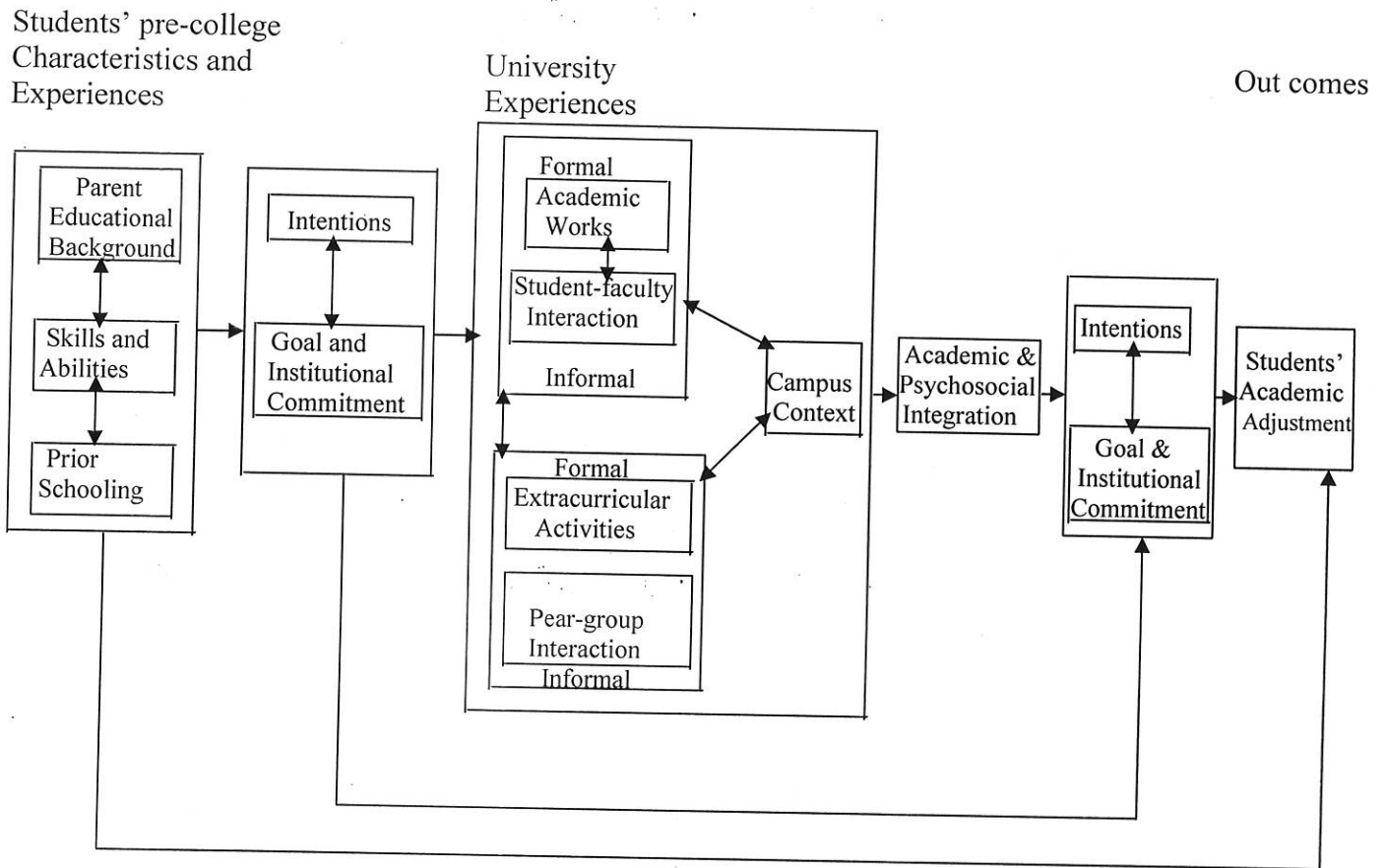


Figure 1: Tinto's Model adapted for the current study. Source: (Kist, 2009:43)

As Tinto (1987) emphasized, there are several pre-entry attributes which can influence students' success in college. These include parent educational background, students' skills and abilities (values, intellectual and emotional characteristics), and previous educational characteristics (cited in Kist, 2009). Thus, at the beginning of college education these various previous experiences influence each other as well as the students' goals and institutional commitment. On the other hand, these precollege characteristics directly and indirectly affect students' academic adjustment. First year students are therefore must reject their old environmental experiences in order to learn the norms and behaviors of the new campus environment (Tinto as cited in LaBoone, 2006).

Tinto revealed that, students' formal and informal interaction within the college environment create opportunities for their academic and social integration. Formal means of academic integration include class attendance, class participation, and academic works, whereas informal (outside the classroom) students-faculty interactions provide informal academic integration. Extracurricular activities organized within the campus taken as a formal means of social integration, while casual interaction between students themselves serves as informal one (cited in Kist, 2009). In addition to this, the campus context (weather condition, availabilities of educational resources, accommodation and other services) produce psychosocial and academic integration. These have either negative or positive influence on students' academic adjustment.

The goal of college experience as Tinto claimed is the personal/normative integration. The personal/normative integration is the place at which the psychosocial and academic incorporation could take place. Ideally, even though academic success occurred as a result of academic and social integration, Tinto believed that academic integration can occur without social integration. However, the likelihood of students' persistence to graduation is decreased. In addition, integration occurs on a continuum ranging from the student with very little to no integration to the college experience to one who is highly integrated in the college environment. Especially, academic adjustment occurs when psychosocial and academic integration increases one's institutional commitment (Tinto as cited in Kist, 2009).

2.2.2. Astin's Student Involvement Theory

This theory is similar with Tinto's theory in that it focused on the factors that hinder higher institution students from successfully completing their studies. Unlike Tinto's theory which gives for precollege attributes and college experiences, Astin offer more emphasis to in-college/university experiences. Particularly, Astin theory give due attention to students' degree of involvement or the energy they devoted on academic works, extracurricular activities and their participation in campus social environment. He believed that such involvement could increase students' social, academic and emotional skills.

Student involvement theory described on the longitudinal study of college students to examine the factors that influence college students' persistence at university and resulted in their dropout (Astin, 1990). According to this theory, the better students' involvement in college environment such as extracurricular activities and interaction with faculty and peers, the better they would adjust academically. Astin emphasized that, an involved student is the one who, spends a significant amount of time on studying and lot of time on the college campus who joins and participates in student organization and finally interact with peers and faculty members.

As Waller described in his study on assessing adjustment of first year engineering students in summer program, the term 'involvement' is defined as "the amount of energy that student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1984 as cited in Waller, 2009: 24). Latter in 1999, he refined the term 'involvement' as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that student devotes to the academic experience" (cited in Waller, 2009: 24). This theory is also taken as theoretical framework for the current study;

because of that it clearly explained students' social interactions with significant campus communities and psychological readiness so that they better academically adjusted.

According to Astin (1993), more than any other environmental variables faculty orientations produce positive effects on overall academic adjustment. He found that students-faculty interaction has positive correlation with various students' outcomes and factors such as enrolment in graduate; overall college experiences, college grade point average, degree attainment, every self-reported areas of intellectual and personal growth.

2.3. Students' Academic Adjustment

Students' academic adjustment is more related to students themselves. "If the freshmen cannot adapt to the new environment quickly, they may have difficulties in their studying and psychological developments" (Wang, Chen, Zhao, & Xu, 2006: p.2). Therefore, first year students are required to adjust to the sometimes overwhelming demands of the academic curricula (stringent requirement for passing massive amount of reading assignments, extensive project reports, etc.) and to the competitive atmosphere on campus during their entrance. Thus, students are expected to assimilate a vast amount of academic materials within the short time and less than optimal study conditions; they need to acquired effective study habits and techniques to cope with such stressors so that they better succeed (as Mechanic cited in Zeidner, 1992). In addition, students who make clear and purposeful goals are more likely to persist in attaining their academic demands (Melendez & Melendez, 2010) and the better they are adjusted to their academic environment, the better will be their academic performance (Lent, Taveira, Sheu, & Singley, 2009).

Especially, first year students are strongly advised to realize and learn on how university educational system works and on how teaching and learning process (note taking skill) are take place, in order to adjust themselves in the academic environment. Moreover, they should realize that their ability to plan and study accordingly; their habit of good concentration, skills of note taking have great contribution for their academic success (Yusuf, 1999). They also need to calculate carefully their time resources and to be sufficiently motivated to invest the time and energy required to meet academic requirements and successfully pass the exam (Mechanic as cited in Zeidner, 1992). This could not achieve unless, they committed to academic goals and develop strong in their willingness to strive hard in their studies, as well as their future orientation and readiness to face challenges (Elias, Noordin, & Mahyuddin, 2010). Thus, their commitment to meet their goals and willingness to comply with the academic and social demands of the institution has positive influence on their academic adjustment (Boulter, 2002).

However, first year students are unable to fulfill these expectations and academic demands. They overestimated their ability to adjust academically to their college and underestimated their ability to make social interaction and emotional adjustment (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). In addition many of them are underprepared for the academic demands of college (Wirt et al. as cited in Schrader & Brown, 2008). Even if they are prepared academically, students may neither be aware of, nor use existing institutional services (laboratories, libraries, counseling services, etc.) to their advantage. Thus, majority of first year students are found to have moderate level of academic adjustment (Abdullah et al., 2009).

On the other hand, studies on the nature of university undergraduate students' academic adjustment problems and the influence of selected socio-demographic variables found the following academic problems of the first year university students. Some of them were, inability suitable place to study, difficult in understanding the recommended text books, absence of adequate educational resources, enormity of the work given (assignment, homework, term papers, etc.), having to move from one lecture room to another and the strictness of the university (Omoteso, 2006).

2.4. Social Influences on Students' Academic Adjustment

Students' social interactions with various communities of the college/university (peers, faculties, instructors, etc.) and outside the university have its' own influences on students' academic adjustment. According to Vichet and Cynthia (2008), students' integration into the campus environment and maintaining contact with the prior community are both important for students' academic adjustment. Students who adjust to university life in the sense that they are involved in various social activities (sports, clubs, panel discussion, team work) are more likely to achieve high grades and perceive coursework more than those who are not involved (Grayson, 2003).

Moreover, as several empirical research revealed, students' informal interaction with their instructors have positive influence on their academic performance, satisfaction with academic works, adjustment and career goals (Andrews, et al., Lampart, Terenzin & Pascarella as cited in Berrier et al., 2005). Other studies have also support the above claims by showing that students involvement in various extracurricular activities, an obligation or a desire to commitment (which is beyond the minimum expectations for

course work) and interaction with peers, staff, and faculty outside of the academic setting are better determine students' academic adjustment (Adams, Astin, & Willis as cited in Waller, 2009). They believe that such involvement would increase students' motivation to learn and work on the complex analytical skills needed for academic adjustment.

Especially, the quality of individual interaction with the communities of the institution and extent to which these interactions are perceived by the students as positive was a factor in academic adjustment (Boulter, 2002). Students who have frequently contact with faculty members in and outside the classroom are more satisfied with their academic experiences, are more likely to adjust, and perceived themselves to have learned more than students who have less faculty interaction (Cross as cited in Saret, 2007). In addition, students' ability to make friends in general and their interest to communicate their instructors and academic advisor are contributed to academic success. However, first year students fail to make vital connections to individuals who care about them; separated from their peers and unable to meet with their academic advisor on the regular basis.

2.5. Psychological Influences on Students' Academic Adjustment

For first year students, living away from home and attached to social and cultural diversity that is different from the communities with which they are most familiar create psychosocial problems at all and it affect their academic adjustment in particular (Bell, 1996). In addition, the various college environment demands to which students are expected to cope with and need to negotiate are create considerable stress on new students. Some of these sources of stress are resulted in their adjustment problems and

academic difficulties. The potential consequences of elevated stress among other things are feeling of frustration, anxiety, depression, overwhelmed and inability to function academically (Zeidner, 1992).

First year students' psychological problems (fear of being unable to succeed, depression, anxiety and stress) are manifested as psychosomatic complaints such as sleep disturbance, eating problems (loss of appetite), fatigue, stomach ache, or headache. Although their problems are psychological in reality they will often seek medical help for their physical complaint (Jun-Chin & Jenny, 1997). The other psychological stressors that incoming students reported are lack of motivation, bad study habits, inability to concentrate, loss of interest, low self-esteem, irritability and anger. Hence, students who are experienced such kinds of stressors when they are about to start their first year at university encountered adjustment difficulties in general and academic adjustment in particular (Pancer, Hunsber, Pratt, & Alisat, 2000).

On the other hand, the general psychological distress students experienced during the first year life encompass the personal-emotional transition. This is because; students' sense of psychological and physical well-being may determine their personal-emotional transition (Baker & Siryk, 1999). Thus, students' academic adjustment is highly determined by their level of personal-emotional adjustment. Usually, those students with low personal-emotional scores on measures of adjustment scales are appeared to experience lesser level of psychological and mental health. In addition, they were unable to update with academic work and being unsatisfied with their level of academic performance, and were more likely to trouble concentrating while studying (Adler, Raju, Beveridge, Wang, & Zimmermann, 2008). Because, "First year students feel homesickness and daydream of

memories back home think about what loved ones are doing back home particular time” (Jun-Chin & Jenny, 1997: 5).

First year students are therefore, must make necessary adjustments to cope with various psychological problems to achieve better academic adjustment and feel a more positive sense of wellbeing (Zeidner, 1992). Several studies suggested that students with various psychological difficulties are more benefited from counseling services, and those students who regularly visit counseling center are better adjusted than those who did not. In contrast, those students who sought counseling but unable to counseled are experienced more difficulties in coping with various educational, interpersonal, and other college demands associated with academic adjustment (DeStefano et al. as cited in LaBoone, 2006).

2.6. Institutional Influence on Students’ Academic Adjustment

According to Astin (1993), university environment is the most overlooked issue that influences first year students’ academic adjustment. The college environment required due attention because of that it encompasses everything that happened to students during the course of an educational program which might possibly influence their outcomes, and institutional climate in which the program operates. Moreover, various internal organizational structures, policies, cultures, and practices have influence on students’ experiences and learning outcomes (Terenzini & Reason, 2005).

Although students lack of preparation, poor campus engagement, and family responsibilities are beyond the control of university, it is necessary to shift the focus from

what is wrong with the students to what is wrong with the institution (Zwerling as cited in Schuetz, 2005). The institutional bureaucratic problems, confusing choices, limited counseling availability, poor advice from faculty staff, delayed detection of mistakes, and poor handling of conflicting demands are some of the problems resulted in students' academic adjustment difficulties (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum as cited in Schuetz, 2005). In addition, the absences of educational resources (libraries, laboratories, text books, reference books, etc.) are adversely affects student academic adjustment (Wilson, 1984).

The other institutional related problems are related to students' placements. Wilson (1984), found that majority of first year students were forced to take/join a particular academic programme (department). Because of this, those students who placed without their interests or abilities are less motivated for their course works or demands and more likely to show poor academic adjustment. They also demonstrate a lack of persistence in their academic work, like not to attend class on a regular basis and feeling of self-efficacy.

To bring successful students' academic adjustment institution must play important roles in providing them supportive services (Townsend-Green, 2009). These services are designed to meet day-to-day needs for food, accommodation, health care, counseling services, and so no. The roles of these services are to support learning and the methods for referral, integration, and accommodation to create a more holistic approach that brings together the role of department teaching staff and support staff so that a successful academic adjustment occur (Gosling, 2003).

Advising or mentoring programs are the other way of helping first year students' academic adjustment. To prevent first year students' academic adjustment problems, many universities have developed mentoring programs. These programs create opportunities for new students to meet their instructors regularly on one to one basis, and are aimed at providing the stressful events of the transition like academic difficulties (Rhodes et al. as cited in Bernier, 2005). The advising meeting focused on such issues as academic and career goal setting, basic study skills, and attitudes toward college, coping strategies, and academic progress (Astone, Nunes-Wormeck, & Smolaka, 1989). These kinds of the programs improve students' coping skills with various college challenges and academic adjustment problems.

2.7. Gender Difference in Academic Adjustment

Gender difference in academic adjustment is one aspect seen among higher education institution students. As several studies revealed that, gender is a significant predictor of students' academic adjustment and it is found that male students scored better on academic adjustment scale as compared to male (Abdullah et al., 2009; Mattanah, Hancock & Brand, 2004; Jou & Fukada, 1996). Similarly, in Ethiopian context female students were found to be lower scores on academic achievement than male students (Amare, 2001; Demewoz, Mehadi, & Tesfaye, 2005; & Yalew, 2003).

This difference is occurred because of that first year female students' academic adjustment is very much affected by their social relationship and social experiences in campus. Hence, if they experienced difficulties in establishing social relationship and their social experience is unsatisfactory; their college adjustment would likely to be

affected (Kenny & Rice, 1995). Similarly, Tinto claimed that, male students leaved college usually for academic reasons whereas female dropout because they are more often influenced by social force than academic reason (cited in LaBoone, 2006). In addition, female students those joined the department in which male dominated are often do not persist to graduation and behaviors in the class does not favor them (Sandler et al. as cited in LaBoone, 2006).

Although students' interactions with other significant individuals have positive influence on their academic adjustment, studies showed that female students have more negative interactions with others significant individuals. Some evidence for example is that instructors are more likely to attribute failure to low ability when interacting with females than males. Such conditions lead female students to worry about their poor academic skills and lack of confidence (Dweck, Davidson, Nelson, & Enna, 1978). However, other evidences revealed that female students are more likely seek and receive social support from significant individuals than male when they encountered academic problems. Thus, such support is associated with better academic adjustment (Ruble et al., Causey & Dubow as cited in Altermatt, 2007).

To this end, gender difference in academic adjustment is likely to established early while students enjoying different departments. Female students are more likely prefer less competitive department during their major selection, which could reduce their academic competition skills (Dayioglu & Turut-Asik, 2007).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this part of the study research design, participants of the study, data collection instruments, data gathering procedure, and method of data analysis were briefly described.

3.1. Research Design

The focus of this study was to investigate academic adjustment problems of first year Madawalabu University students. Hence, a large number of respondents were included; quantitative survey research design which is complimented by qualitative research approach was used. This research design helps the researcher “to seek elaboration, enhancement and clarification of the results from one method with the results from other method” (Johnson & Christensen, 2008: 451). As Creswell (2003) described, in such research design qualitative results were used to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of a primarily quantitative data. This research design is characterized by collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by qualitative. The qualitative and quantitative data are therefore combined during interpretation/discussion.

3.2. Participants of the Study

The population of this study was all the first year (2010/11 entry) Madawalabu University students. The total numbers of population were 2098 students (550 female and 1548 male). The site was selected for the study, because researcher has background knowledge about the area as he was working in this university for a year.

The participants of the study were 217 first year students (49 female and 168 male) those randomly selected from five faculties/schools (School of Natural Science, School of Engineering & Technology, School of Agriculture, School of Mathematical Science, and Health Science College). Their ages were from 18 to 25 years old with mean of 20.1 and standard deviation of 1.3. Firstly, 230 (11%) of students were selected for the study. However, 13 students those who did not properly filled the questionnaire were omitted from analysis. In addition, eight informants those expected to have fruitful information on the area of students' academic adjustment deans of respective faculties/schools, student dean, health officer and registrar officer were purposely selected for the interview. Unfortunately, dean of school of mathematical science (absent during data collection) did not included in the study. Similarly, students' dean was unable (lack of interest) to provided sufficient information hence, excluded from analysis.

3.3. Sampling Techniques

Five schools and departments were selected by two-stage cluster sampling technique. Accordingly, School of Natural Science, School of Engineering & Technology, School of Agriculture, School of Mathematical Science, and Health Science College were selected. One department from each school was randomly selected. Namely, department of sport science, computer science, plant science, mathematics, and public health were included in the study respectively. In addition to this, purposive sampling was employed to choose deans of each faculty/school, student dean, health officer, and registrar officer. They were selected on the assumption that they are key individuals to provide information on the first year students' academic adjustment problems.

3.4. Data Collection Instruments

The Baker and Siryk (1999) Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) was the main tool employed in this study. The rationale for using questionnaire was to collect data from many of participants and to enable them to feel free while offering information. In addition, several researches on the area were also employed questionnaire as preferred to another tools (Waller, 2009; Ra & Rahamtulla, 2007; Kist, 2009; Abdullah et al., 2009). Basically, the SACQ has 9 points ranging from “applies very closely to me” on the left to “doesn’t apply to me at all” on the right. However, during adaptation it was reduced to 5 points Likert-type scales from “strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5)” to minimize the confusion which may arise as a result of the responses length. Generally, out of 67 items, 59 of them were adapted for the current research and checked for the reliability during pilot test; totally it was found to have reliability of 0.88 at Cronbach’s Alpha.

The questionnaire has five different parts. The first part is about participants’ general demographic background (sex, age, name of faculty/school, parent educational level). The second part is about academic adjustment which measures higher education learning experiences in relation to student’s motivation, application, performance, and general academic environment. Thus, from 24 items 20 were adapted and pre-tested to see the reliability of items and it was found to be reliable with Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.71. The samples of items in relation to the above are “I am enjoying my academic work at university. (*Motivation*)”; “I have been keeping up to date my academic work. (*Application*)”; “I am finding academic work at university is difficult. (*Performance*)”; “I am satisfied with my program of courses for this semester. (*Academic Environment*).”

The third part of the scale about social adjustment and it measures the extent to which student interacts with general, other people, social environment and how student adjusts to being away from home (homesickness). Out of 20 items 18 of them were adapted and pilot test was made. It was found to be reliable with Cronbach's Alpha of 0.72. Example of statements associated with this are: "I am very involved with social activities in college. (*General*)"; "I am having difficulty feeling to mix with other people at university. (*Other people*)"; "Being alone from home is a source of difficulty for me. (*Homesickness*)"; "I am satisfied with living in a university dormitory. (*Social Environment*)."

The fourth is deal with personal-emotional adjustment and specifically it measures student's psychological states and physical comfort which correspond to psychological problems. It has 15 items and checked for reliability during pilot study as having reliability of 0.70 at Cronbach's Alpha. Sample items for psychological are: "I have been feeling tense or nervous, I have been able to control my emotion very well" and "I have not been sleeping very well lately. (*Physical*)."

Finally, institutional/goal commitment scale measures student's dedication to their goal and to their institutional connection. Specifically, student's level of satisfaction with being attending university in general and their university in particular was measured. 6 items were adapted from 7 items and found to have reliability of 0.67 at Cronbach's Alpha. Sample of items are: "I am satisfied now about my decision to go to college. (*General*), and I have been giving a lot thought to withdraw from this university. (*Particular*)."

On the other hand, semi-structured interview guide was developed by the researcher through intensive reading of different literature. The interview guide was designed in

such a way to elicit participants' views about first year students' academic adjustment problems.

3.5. Data Gathering Procedure

Two weeks prior to actual data collection, pilot test was made at Addis Ababa University on 20 first years pre-engineering students to check the reliability of instruments and then modified accordingly. Conducting pilot study on a small sample is appropriate as Johnson and Christensen (2008) revealed, even you can conduct pilot test with minimum of 5-10 individuals. After getting due permission from the concerned body, the researcher obtained the lists of respective faculties/schools and numbers of the students from registrar. Then, the selection of faculties/schools and participants were made by applying the predetermined sampling techniques.

The administration of the questionnaire to participants was carried out during their normal class having obtained permission from students and their instructors. Before questionnaire administration, a brief oral orientation was provided to participants in addition to written direction of the scales. In addition, participants were told that after questionnaire administration, 5 students those randomly selected and if they complete the questionnaire properly they will rewarded some money. This was intentionally designed to motivate participants to fill up questionnaire accurately. Finally, English version of questionnaire was administrated to participants during their normal class. As researcher pre-promised to participants, rewards were given to five participants those randomly selected by lottery method using their identification number. The general reaction to the survey was

favorable and no problems of co-operation were encountered; indeed many students stayed behind after the sessions to discuss their difficulties.

Similarly, the interviews were conducted at times and locations depending on the participants preference. Based on the agreement made between the researcher and interviewees, tape recorder was not used during interview sessions. Thus, field notes were recorded during the interviewing process and the interview took approximately 30-40 minutes.

3.6. Method of Data Analysis

To analyze data collected via questionnaires different types of descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Thus, quantitative data were analyzed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 17 and were checked for accuracy by double entering data and comparing the entries. Data were screened by checking frequency distributions. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, range, frequency, and percentage were used to analyze demographic data, level of students' academic adjustment, and data gathered by open ended question. Level of students' academic adjustment was divided into three categories (high, medium, and low) based on the guidelines provided by the authors in the manual. Hence, frequencies of students' raw scores on academic adjustment scale were used. Particularly, students' raw scores were changed into standardized score to see how much does the individual score far from the mean.

Stepwise multiple regressions were used to know the combined effect of psychosocial influence, and institutional/goal commitment on students' academic adjustment and to see the most predictor variable. Correlation matrix was used to see the association of predictor variables with dependent variable. To see the gender difference in students' academic adjustment scores, an independent t-test was employed. ANOVA was also used to compare the mean difference of students' academic adjustment scores between faculties/schools.

On the other hand, qualitative data were analyzed by coding, identifying common themes and categorizing of themes. Participants were also given code name such as *I, II, III, IV, V, and VI*. Thus, all qualitative data were analyzed and interpreted.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this part of the study the demographic data of participants' were tabulated and presented. Accordingly, an independent t-test to see gender difference in students' academic adjustment and one way ANOVA to compare students' academic adjustment scores among faculties/schools were employed. Multiple regressions also used to see the combined effect of independent variables (psychological adjustment, social adjustment, and institutional/goal commitment) and presented. Finally, qualitative data obtained through interview were presented next to the analysis of quantitative data.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the participants (N=217)

Variables	Category	Number	Percent	Mean	SD
Sex	Male	168	77.4		
	Female	49	22.6		
	Total	217	100.0		
Age	18 – 20	148	68.2	20.1	1.3
	21 – 23	65	30.0		
	24 – 26	4	1.8		
	Total	217	100.0		
School of Studies	School of Natural Science	52	24.0		
	School of Engineering & Technology	49	22.6		
	School of Agriculture	42	19.4		
	School of Mathematical Science	39	18.0		
	Health Science College	35	16.1		
	Total	217	100.0		
Father's Educational Level	Never attended	79	36.4		
	Elementary school (grade 1-8)	88	40.6		
	High school (grade 9-12)	26	12.0		
	Some college	14	6.5		
	University degree and above	10	4.6		
	Total	217	100.0		
Mother's Educational Level	Never attended	110	50.7		
	Elementary school (grade 1-8)	75	34.6		
	High school (grade 9-12)	15	6.9		
	Some college	13	6.0		
	University degree and above	4	1.8		
	Total	217	100.0		

From the above Table 1, out of the total 217 participants 77.4% of them were male and the rest 22.6% were female. In terms of age, most of the participants (98%) involved in this study were below 24 years old; and more than half (68%) were between 18-20 years

old. The mean age of participants was 20.1 with standard deviation of 1.3. The participants were selected from five schools of the studies namely, school of natural science, school of engineering and technology, school of agriculture, school of mathematical sciences, and health science college. 35 to 52 students were included from each school.

The greatest proportion of participants' parental education level was elementary and below. Specifically, about 51% of the participants were illiterate mother and 34.6% of them were with elementary education school. About six percent of students came from mothers who completed either high school or some college education; and those came from mothers whose educational level were university and above were less than two percent. Similarly, 36.4% of their fathers were never attended elementary education, and 40.6% were completed elementary school education. 12% of the participants' father had high school education and about seven percent of them were attended some college education. Participants came from fathers with university and above degree were about seven percent.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix among independent and dependents variables (N=217)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Sex (1)	-	-0.14*	0.30**	0.31**	-0.30**	-0.10	-0.07	-0.14*
Faculty/schools (2)		-	-0.15*	-0.02	0.19**	0.03	0.20**	0.04
Father's educational level (3)			-	0.60**	-0.15*	-0.15*	-0.01	-0.20**
Mother's educational level (4)				-	-0.17*	-0.04	-0.06	-0.11
Academic adjustment (5)					-	0.52**	0.34**	0.35**
Social adjustment (6)						-	0.08	0.46**
Psychological adjustment (7)							-	0.22**
Institutional/goal commitment (8)								-

**P < 0.01, *P < 0.05

From Table 2, most of the correlation coefficients between independent (psychological adjustment, social adjustment, institutional/goal commitment) and dependent (academic adjustment) were statistically significant either at $\alpha = 0.01$ or $\alpha = 0.05$. Among the dependent variables, social adjustment was found significant and have the highest positive correlation coefficient with academic adjustment ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.01$). Institutional commitment is the second variable significantly and positively correlated

with academic adjustment followed by psychological adjustment ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$ and $r = 0.34$, $p < 0.01$ respectively).

With regard to demographic variables, sex (code: male 1 and female 2) was significant and has negative correlation with academic adjustment ($r = -0.31$, $p < 0.01$). On the other hand, faculties/schools were found statistically significant and have positive relationship with academic adjustment ($r = 0.19$). This means as one goes from School of Natural Science to Health Science College students' academic adjustment scores increase and vice versa. They were coded as follow: School of Natural Science (1), School of Engineering & Technology (2), School of Agriculture (3), School of Mathematical Science (4), and Health Science College (5).

In addition, statistically significant and negative correlation was found between parent's educational level and students' academic adjustment at $\alpha = 0.05$. Thus, father's educational level was statistically significant and it has negative correlation coefficient with students' academic adjustment ($r = -0.15$, $p < 0.05$). Similarly, significant and negative relationship was found between mother's educational level and students' academic adjustment ($r = -0.17$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 3: Students' level of academic adjustment (N = 217, Mean of scores = 72.63)

Variable	High			Medium			Low		
	Score	Frequency	%	Score	Frequency	%	Score	Frequency	%
Academic adjustment	83 & above	44	20.28	63 to 82	136	62.67	62 & below	37	17.05

As seen from the Table 3, out of the total participants of this study 17.05% of them were at lower academic adjustment level whereas, 20.28% of them were at higher level of academic adjustment. In other word, those students labeled as low level of academic adjustment were below negative one standard deviation. However, those of high level of academic adjustment were above positive one standard deviation. The rest 62.67% of the students with moderate level of academic adjustment with adjustment scores between - 1 and + 1 standard deviation.

Table 4: Multiple correlation coefficients and percentage of variances explained by social adjustment, psychological adjustment, and institutional commitment

Predictors	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	R Square Change
Social adjustment	0.52	0.27	0.26	8.69	0.267*
Psychological adjustment	0.60	0.36	0.35	8.14	0.092*
Institutional/goal commitment	0.64	0.40	0.40	7.88	0.044*

*P < 0.05

As observed from Table 4 using the stepwise multiple regression method, the model was statistically significant: $F(3, 213) = 47.98, P < 0.05$. The model explained 40% of variation in dependent variable. Taking predictor variables individually, social influence was the best predictor of first year students' academic adjustment and accounted for 27% of the explained variance in dependent variable. Psychological influence was the second best predictor accounted for an additional nine percent of the total variation in first year students' academic adjustment. Thirdly, an additional four percent of the variance was accounted by institutional/goal commitment.

Table 5: One-way ANOVA for multiple regression analysis

Variables entered	Sources of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Social adjustment	Regression	5923.67	1	5923.67	78.46*
	Residual	16233.10	215	75.50	
	Total	22156.77	216		
Psychological adjustment	Regression	7963.07	2	3981.53	60.03*
	Residual	14193.70	214	66.33	
	Total	22156.77	216		
Institutional/goal Commitment	Regression	8935.21	3	2978.40	47.98*
	Residual	13221.55	213	62.07	
	Total	22156.77	216		

*P < 0.05

As observed from Table 5, the stepwise regression model entered social adjustment in the first step and it significantly explained students' academic adjustment $F(1, 215) = 78.46$, $P < 0.05$. Secondly, social adjustment and psychological adjustment were entered and it was also statistically significant predictor of students' academic adjustment $F(2, 214) = 60.03$, $p < 0.05$. Finally, the model entered social adjustment, psychological adjustment and institutional/goal commitment and the third additional variable significantly predicted students' academic adjustment $F(3, 213) = 47.98$, $p < 0.05$.

Table 6: Multiple regression coefficients of significant predictor variables

Predictor Variables	B	Std. Error	β	t-value
(Constant)	20.36	4.55	-	
Social adjustment	0.43	0.06	0.40	6.83*
Psychological adjustment	0.28	0.07	0.24	4.19*
Institutional/goal commitment	0.58	0.15	0.24	3.96*

*p < 0.05

As can be seen from Table 6, the regression model included social adjustment, psychological adjustment and institutional/goal commitment that were found to be significant contributors ($t = 6.83, p < 0.05, t = 4.19, p < 0.05$ and $t = 3.96, p < 0.05$ respectively) to the explained variation of first year students' academic adjustment. The prediction equation for the regression model using these predictor variables was, therefore, $\hat{Y} = 20.36 + 0.43x_1 + 0.28x_2 + 0.58x_3$ where, x_1, x_2 and x_3 are social adjustment, psychological adjustment and institutional commitment respectively.

Table 7: Gender differences in the mean academic adjustment scores (N = 217)

Variables	Sex	Number	Mean	SD	t-value
Academic adjustment	Male	168	74.29	10.14	4.68*
	Female	49	66.94	7.85	

*P < 0.05

An independent t-test result showed in Table 7 that there was statistically significant gender difference in mean scores of students' academic adjustment at ($t = 4.68, p < 0.05$). As observed from Table 6, female students scored lower mean academic adjustment score (66.94) than male students (74.29).

Table 8: Summary of one way ANOVA of students' academic adjustment scores among schools/faculties

Source of Variations	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	1053.35	4	263.34	2.65
Within Groups	21103.42	212	99.54	
Total	22156.77	216		

As observed from Table 8, statistically significant mean difference in students' academic adjustment among the schools of studies/faculties were not found: $F(4, 212) = 2.65, P > 0.05$. There is no variation in academic adjustment among students from different schools/institutions.

Data obtained from open ended question

To obtain information from the participants' point of view open ended question which asked students to list the common factors that have been affecting their academic adjustment were also presented to participants. Accordingly, the data collected were tabulated in Table 9.

Table 9: Factors that affected students' academic adjustment (N = 217)

S. No	Variables	Frequency	Percent
1	Problem of toilet	191	88.01
2	Inconsistency of electric power	187	86.18
3	Shortage of library working hours (from 2:30am to 10:00pm)	178	82.03
4	Absence of students' lounge (recreation place)	164	75.58
5	Problem of bathroom	147	67.74
6	Absence of internet services	136	62.67
7	Shortage of reference books	131	60.37
8	Absence of public phone around the campus	89	41.01
9	Insufficient services of health center	72	33.18
10	Inadequate water and absence of counseling services	67	30.86
11	Coldness of the weather condition	12	5.53
12	Distance from the family	10	4.61

As showed in Table 9, more than 80% of the participants said that problem of toilet, inconsistency of electric power (they were got electric three days per week), and shortage

of library working hours (from 2:30am to 10:00pm) have been affecting their academic adjustment. The other problems they raised were the absence of students' lounge (recreational places in the campus), problem of bathroom, and absence of internet service (75.58%, 67.74%, and 62.67 respectively). With regard to internet service one student expressed his feeling as follow: "I am a student of computer science but still I couldn't browse internet because of the absence of internet services in this university although I am expected to compete with those students who will graduate from other university."

The absence of sufficient books in the library was the other issue raised by 60% of the participants. In addition, about 41% of the first year students had communication problem due to the absence of public phone around the campus, and around 30% were raised insufficient clinical services, inadequate water and absence of counseling services. On the other side, some students said the unfamiliarity of weather conditions and the distance from family were affected their academic adjustment. In short most of the problems raised by students were related to the lack/shortage of facilities of the university.

Data collected through interview

With regard to first year students' academic adjustment problems, data were also collected from the head of School of Natural Science (*I*), School of Engineering & Technology (*II*), School of Agriculture (*III*), Health Science College (*IV*), health center (*V*) and registrar (*VI*) and presented as follow. Students were not interviewed because of that the questionnaire has an additional open ended question which asked students to write their views about the problems.

First year students' academic adjustment problems were highly pronounced in Madawalabu University as the data from all interviewees revealed. Most of the problems were related to institutional facilities/services, educational resources, psychosocial and students' background. With regard to institutional related problems, students were assigned to different departments without their interests. While explaining this interviewee *III* said, "In some case students were chosen the same department although beyond the capacity of a department. In that cases, department assigned students to others department based on its criteria (student's 2nd, 3rd ... choices, entrance exam point)." Especially, students assigned to different departments without their interest were worry about their success and competing with other students (interviewee *III*). To triangulate this issue frequency of item 20 of academic adjustment scale which said, "I am quite satisfied with the department I belongs to." was considered (appendix A). The response showed that 24% of the students were not satisfied with the department that they have joined.

The other institutional related problems were the shortage of classrooms and instructors' inability to begin class on time. Concerning the issue of classroom, interviewee *I* said "...the shortage of classroom affected teaching-learning process in this campus. For example, there are three batches of students in one department, but we have single classroom for all of them." Interviewee *I* further explained that because of the shortage of classroom, both students and instructors often waste 5-10 minutes while exchanging a classroom. As research participants *I* and *III* described, this problem also hindered them from providing tutorial. With regard to instructors' inability to start class on time, interviewee *IV* expresses his feeling as follow: "...although the class schedule is posted as soon as the registration is completed, some instructors, especially who have been teaching

common courses begin the class very late (often 3-4 weeks later).” This interviewee also explained that he tried to solve this problem. However, it is not yet been solved because most of the instructors associated it with lack of transportation.

Moreover, participants *IV* and *VI* argued that the distance of health campus (12km far) from the main campus had affected students’ academic adjustment. As they revealed, health science students have to go the main campus for any issues related to registration, identification card, grade report, and in case of problem with their grades. In some case, because of understaffed manpower the students may not get the services on time and they forced to go main campus more than three times for single case. Hence, the transportation and lunch fee were covered by students themselves. In addition, participants *II* and *I* expressed their observations in such a way that first year students faced academic adjustment problems early when they entered the campus. Interviewee *I* said, “As you know early orientation is very important for newcomers, but in this campus there is lack of orientation concerning incoming students about where to go, in which department to apply, whom to ask for information” In the contrary, the research participant *VI* said, “...we provided orientation after two days as soon as the registration is completed”. However, as to this informant the orientations were focused on the topics like prerequisite courses, add/drop, pass grade, probation, warning, dismissal, etc. Interviewee *IV* also shared the participant *VI*’s ideas.

The other problems were related to the educational resources which are affecting first year students’ academic adjustment. Four of the participants (*I*, *II*, *III*, & *IV*) identified that the limitation of educational resources such as shortage of books, reference materials, and laboratory equipments (computers, drawing materials, chemicals, etc.) are affecting

students' academic adjustment. Especially, as *III* interviewee said, "Even those donated books are unrelated to specific course...assigning students to the department that have no sufficient educational resources is like constructing house without pillar." Hence, "... students depend mostly on instructors' notes and they are exam oriented (interviewee *IV*)." As to this informant, the limitation of educational resources limited students' ability to explore and expand their knowledge.

Psychosocial problems and some of health related problems were other problems which are affecting first year students' academic adjustment. As data from health center showed, from September 1st to December 2, 2010 about 997 students (Registration No. 2932 – 3929) were admitted at University Health Center and 46% of them were first year students. As to the interviewee *V*, most of them were reported similar problems such as loss of appetite, flu/coughs, common-cold, and headache; "...I think these problems are not unique to this university...." As she (interviewee *V*) explained, even some of their problems were psychosocial like loneliness, tension, stress, and distance from their home (homesickness). She argued that, students faced psychological problems did not helped due to the absence of counseling services in the campus. Data from quantitative also supported the above claim in that, about 36% of students were need to consult counselor although they did not helped (see item number 5 of personal-emotional adjustment scale, Appendix A). Students with health problems were given treatment from the center; but the provided services were limited due to understaffed manpower (one clinical nurse, one pharmacist, and one record officer).

In addition, informants were also asked about their informal interactions with students concerning academic adjustment problems. Participant *III* said, "Personally I had good contact with students....students have been contacting me outside their normal class for advising in any problems they may had and they used English, Amharic or Afan Oromo language to explain their problems." He (informant *III*) also said, "Because I am busy, I cannot communicate with students regularly." As to this informant although he accepted students' problems and communicated with them in their language, they have less opportunities to contact with him. Similarly, the other informants *I*, *IV* and *VI* evaluated their informal contact with students as good. Especially, interviewee *II* said "...look! Pointing to the door; my office is open all the time...as you have seen yesterday and today in the morning, students entered into my office even without knocking ...they asked me whatever they want." However, data from quantitative showed that only less than half (40%) students had informal contact with their instructors on their academic issues (refer item number 9 of social adjustment scale, Appendix A).

On the other hand, participant *II* said that students' lack of readiness in their previous school and discrepancy of their expectation were affected their adjustment. In explaining students' previous abilities he (informant *II*) said, "In most cases students prefer group work to individual assignment and term paper." In addition he said, "...their note taking and writing skills were poor." Data from quantitative also revealed that, about 43% of students have a problem of note taking (see item number 14 of academic adjustment scale, Appendix A). On the other hand, some students were unable to buy educational materials. Interviewee *II* described this issue as follow: "Drawing materials are very important for engineering students. But some students who have financial problem could not buy them." Not only financial problems he (participant *II*) adds "...some of the

materials are not available in the town even those presented were expensive.” As his view, students from bigger city could obtain the required materials in any ways. However, especially those students from the region with limited income could not buy. Thus, they under achieved on their academic work.

Moreover, students are expecting university to fulfill all necessary materials so that they can find on the moment they need. For example interviewee *II* said, “Some of my students were directly came to my office and asked me different materials.” He expressed that university have been working to fulfill the necessary materials as much as possible. “...Ministry of Education is also asked us to report materials we in need and I expect that we shall have them near in the future.” For the time being as a solution he said, “...we have been borrowing available materials for some of the students.”

With regard to gender difference in academic adjustment interviewee *III* said, “Females faced academic adjustment problems than males; ...I have seen this by comparing their note taking skills, individual works, and their participations in the classroom.” As to this informant, the reasons for females lower in academic adjustment were social influence and lack of precollege preparations. Result from quantitative also supported this finding (see Table 7: 41). However, other participants (*I, II, VI & IV*) explained that both females and males students faced similar academic adjustment problems. As to four informants (*I, II, III & IV*) not much special supports were given to solve students’ academic adjustment problems yet. Especially, informant *III* said “...tutorials need its own budget and have to given in available classroom, without fulfilling these providing tutorial is unthinkable.”

To sum up, lack of sufficient services (counseling services, registrar office, orientation, tutorial), insufficient educational resources, tension, some of the common health related problems, limited support/low income students obtained from their families, students' assignment to different departments without their interest, lack of students' readiness and mismatch of their expectation were some of the problems raised by interviewees.

Finally, to improve students' adjustment, informants raised the following possible suggestions:

- "University should allocate budget for the tutorial," Interviewee *III* said.
- Informant *IV* said, "University should fulfill educational resources and additional classrooms should constructed." Three of the interviewees (*I*, *II*, & *III*) were also present similar suggestions as informant *IV*.
- "University should speed up its various constructions ... we can then make university environment green and attractive so that students spend their leisure time in campus." Participant *II* said.
- As interviewee *I* suggestion, regular orientations should be given to students.
- "Counseling Center should restart its services so that students with psychosocial problems could helped rather than repeatedly visiting clinic center." Interviewee *V* suggested.
- Interviewee *VI* recommended that university should increase the registrar staff and academic supporting programmes should be given to the students.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The aim of this chapter is to interpret the results of current study along with the theoretical perspectives, related literatures and to discuss the implications to draw conclusions and recommendations.

The purpose of this study was to investigate academic adjustment problems of first year Madawalabu University students. To achieve this purpose mixed research design was employed. Thus, 217 first year students those randomly selected from five randomly selected faculties/schools and six purposely selected informants were participated in the study. Social adjustment, psychological adjustment, and institutional/goal commitment were the independent variables considered in this study. Data collected through questionnaire and interviews were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively depending on their nature. Beside, the discussion was made with respect to each research question.

The major findings of the study revealed that psychosocial adjustment and institutional/goal commitment jointly contributed 40% of the variance in students' academic adjustment. In addition, institutional related problems like lack of facilities/services and educational resources are affecting students' academic adjustment. On the other hand, majorities (62) of the first year students were with moderate level of academic adjustment and female students were lower than male students on academic adjustment scores. When participants compared across various faculties/schools, there is no statistically significant mean difference in academic adjustment scores.

5.1. Psychological Influence on Students' Academic

Adjustment

As observed from the result part of this study, psychological adjustment was found to be statistically significant and predictor for the variation occurred in dependent variable. This is to indicate that students who have psychological problems like difficulty of coping with stress, worry about their success in university, who have difficulty of controlling one's emotion are scored low on academic adjustment scale than their counter part (see Items number 5, 15 & 4 of personal-emotional adjustment scale, Appendix A). Beside this, result from open ended question showed that absence of counseling services were affected students' academic adjustment. Prior finding of Zeidner (1992) also shared similar ideas with this and found that first year students are faced academic difficulties emanated from of frustration, anxiety, depression, overwhelmed and inability to function academically.

Similarly, data obtained from qualitative interview also revealed that first year students are often show, loneliness, worry about the distance from home (homesickness), and fear of failure. This agree with Smith and Wertlieb, (2005) which said that students who are living away from home for the first time and living in university residence may experience homesickness, inability to take responsibility for themselves and making new friendships. In addition, those students admitted at health center request for medical help to release from headache, appetite loss, and cough. Existence of these problems are therefore reduced their competition skills and students' academic work motivation which have influence on their academic adjustment. The previous finding of Jun-Chin and Jenny (1997) which reported that first year students' psychological problems (fear of being

unable to succeed, depression, anxiety and stress) are manifested as psychosomatic complaints such as sleep disturbance, eating problems (loss of appetite), fatigue, stomach ache, or headache also support the current finding. They said although their problems are psychological in reality first year students seek medical help for their physical complaint.

5.2. Social Influence on Students' Academic Adjustment

Social adjustment was statistically significant and the best predictor of explained variance in first year students' academic adjustment. This means those first year students highly participated in social activities like extracurricular activities and those students satisfied with the extent to which they involved in social activities at university were better adjusted academically than those who do not and vice versa (see item number 17 and 6 of social adjustment scale, Appendix A). This finding is consistent with (Astin, 1990) reported that the better students' involvement in college environment such as extracurricular activities and interaction with faculty and peers, the better they would adjust academically. Similarly, it agree with Grayson (2003) finding which said that students who adjust to university life in the sense that they are involved in various social activities (sports, clubs, panel discussion, team work) are more likely to achieve high grades and perceive coursework more than those who are not involved.

In addition, students who developed good skills of communicating with their peers, instructors, and those acquired good skills of working with other people and those students asking some other people for information are more likely good in their academic works (refer item number 7, 10 and 12 of social adjustment scale, Appendix A). This reflected that students' quality of social skills which leads them to develop good

academic adjustment skills. This finding also agreed with the Boulter (2002) found that the quality of individual student' interaction with the communities of the institution and the extent to which these interactions are perceived by the students as positive was a factor in academic adjustment.

5.3. Institutional Factors that Affect Students' Academic Adjustment

In addition to psychosocial adjustment and institutional/goal commitment, result from open ended question revealed that academic adjustment problems of first year students are also affected by other problems related to university services. These are problem of toilet, regularly switch off of electric power, shortage working hour, absence of recreational place and internet services, insufficient books, absence of public phone around the campus, and inadequate water are affecting students' academic adjustment. This finding consistent with Astin (1993) found that university environment is the most overlooked issue that influences first year students' academic adjustment. Similarly, it is agreed with Wilson (1984) previous finding which contented that absences of educational resources (libraries, laboratories, text books, reference books, etc.) are adversely affects student academic adjustment.

On the other hand, interview results identified that university related problems such as limited educational resources, classroom, inadequate services (counseling, registrar, clinic), student related problems (lack of readiness, discrepancy of students' expectation, health problem), limited supports students received from their family. This finding

support the findings of Omoteso (2006) which said that first year students' academic adjustment is affected by factors such as students' inability to get suitable place to study, difficult in understanding the recommended textbooks, absence of adequate educational resources (library, laboratory, classrooms, textbooks, etc.), vastness of the given work (assignments, home works and project works), having to move from one lecture room to another and the strictness of the university.

5.4. Combined Effect of Psychosocial Influence, Institutional/ goal Commitment and Common Factors on Students' Academic Adjustment

The result of multiple correlation coefficients showed that psychological adjustment, social adjustment and institutional/goal commitment influences are significantly contributed to the variation in students' academic adjustment. Thus, 40% of the variations in dependent variable were accounted for by the above three variables. The remaining 60% of variations in students' academic adjustment could be explained by the factors like problems of institutional facilities/services, inadequate educational resources, students' background and by other predictor variables, which were not considered in this study. Similar to this, Bell (1996) found that for first year students living away from home and attached to social and cultural diversity that is different from the communities with which they are most familiar create psychosocial problems at all and it affect their academic adjustment in particular. In addition, the current findings fit with the Tinto's (1987) model which encompasses variety of institutional experiences influence students' academic adjustment. As to this model, students' precollege characteristics influence each other, institutional/goal commitment and academic adjustment. University experiences

(psychosocial, academic and campus context) also influenced by the above factors and were influenced each other. Finally, the combination of these factors decreased one's institutional/goal commitment then by decreasing academic adjustment (cited in Kist, 2009).

5.5. Level of Students' Academic Adjustment

Majorities (62%) of the participants were with medium category of academic adjustment level. These students demonstrated as having difficulties of concentration during study, taking lecture notes, keeping up to date their academic works, using study time efficiently, and having doubt regarding the value of university education. They found that overall academic works at university is difficult. As data from the interview revealed this could be because of that students' lack of preparation in their previous school and students' inability to adjust themselves after they joined university. The current finding is inconsistent with the previous finding of Abdullah et al. (2009) which said that students scored moderate level in academic adjustment due to students' inability to aware of and use existing institutional services (laboratories, libraries, counseling services, etc.) to their advantage. This may be due to the methodology and site difference between the current and previous finding.

5.6. Gender Difference in Academic Adjustment

As results from independent t-test of comparison between male and female on academic adjustment revealed, there was statistically significant gender difference in mean of students' academic adjustment. This is to mean that male students were more academically adjusted than female students. The finding were found to be in line with studies by Abdullah et al. (2009); Mattanah, Hancock and Brand, (2004); Jou and Fukada (1996) whereby gender is a significant predictor of students' academic adjustment and it is found that male students scored better on academic adjustment scale as compared to female.

The reason why female students scored lower on academic adjustment scale than that of male students could be because of the influence of parent educational level. As observed in the result section of this study, majority of students' mother were never attended the formal education. Thus, mother's education has influence on female students' academic adjustment. This is in agreement with the earlier finding (Eksotrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986) who found that female students were highly influenced by their mother's education level whereas, male students by father's education.

5.7. Students' Academic Adjustment by Schools/Faculties

The result of one-way ANOVA showed that statistically significant mean difference was not found among schools/faculties in students' academic adjustment score. This is to mean that students' academic adjustment scores across five faculties/schools were similar. This may be due to that majority (68%, refer appendix C) of the students were

from the same region (may have similar socio-cultural experiences) and of similar parental education. Thus, similarity of students' background may be the reason for students to develop similar academic adjustment. The other reason may be because of the services that the students obtained from institution in general and faculty/school in particular were almost similar.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study, presents the conclusions, and forward recommendations for the future research.

6.1. Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate academic adjustment problems of first year Madawalabu University students. Specifically, the study was intended to answer the following basic research questions:

- To what extent does psychological adjustment influences students' academic adjustment?
- To what extent does social adjustment affects students' academic adjustment?
- How do institutional factors affect first year students' academic adjustment?
- To what extent do first year students adjust themselves academically?
- Is there a significant difference between male and female students in academic adjustment?
- Is there a significant difference among students of different faculties/schools in academic adjustment?

To answer the above basic research questions, 217 first year students were randomly selected from five randomly selected faculties/schools. These were School of Natural Science, School of Engineering & Technology, School of Agriculture, School of Mathematical Science, and Health Science College. In addition, six informants (four

faculties/schools deans, one health officer and one registrar officer) those purposely selected were participated in this study.

Questionnaire and interview were instruments used to collect data from participants. Questionnaire was adapted and pre-tested for reliability and administered for the participants two weeks after the pilot study. However, interview guides were developed by the researcher himself and conducted at preferable times and place of the participants.

Data collected via questionnaire were analyzed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 17. Thus, due care was given while coding, entering, cleaning, computing data. Depending on the nature of the data and basic questions, both descriptive statistics like mean, standard deviation, frequency, and inferential statistics such as ANOVA, multiple regression, independent t-test were employed. On the other hand, data gathered by interview were qualitatively analyzed. Finally, from the findings of the study the following conclusions were made.

1. Majorities (60%) of students were with moderate level of academic adjustment.
2. Social adjustment was significantly influenced first year students' academic adjustment scores.
3. Psychological adjustment was found statistically significant contributor for the variance explained in students' academic adjustment scores.
4. Multiple regression result showed that social adjustment, psychological adjustment and institutional/goal commitment were jointly accounted for 40% for the variation of first year students' academic adjustment.

5. This finding also identified the following institutional factors that are affecting first year students' academic adjustment. These are: problem of toilet, bathroom, electric power, shortage of library working hours, reference books, absence of recreation place, internet services, public phones around/in the campus compound, absence of counseling services, in adequate water and limited services of health center. Moreover, data obtained from interview revealed that lack of supports from university, insufficient educational resources, lack of family support, students' discrepancy of their expectation and lack of readiness are also influencing their academic adjustment.
6. Statistically significant gender difference was found in students' academic adjustment. Thus, academically male students are better adjusted than female students.
7. Result from one-way ANOVA revealed that statistically significant mean difference in students' academic adjustment between faculties/schools was not found.

6.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings the study, the following recommendations were forwarded to help students, administrators, counselors, instructors, and other concerned bodies who need to improve students' academic adjustment.

1. University administrator /authority should give due attention to the seriousness of university facilities/services problems which are affecting students' academic adjustment and should improve accordingly. Especially, faculties/schools and departments should take the responsibility in fulfilling educational resources for their students.
2. All faculties/schools should design programmes (orientation sessions, tutorials, panel discussions, academic interventions) which incorporate academic issues and implement them especially for first year students on a regular basis. Academic advisors/instructors should be more actively involved in such programs in providing the necessary guidance and informal interactions with new students to create better integrations. Especially, female students should be given more attention to maximize their level of academic adjustment.
3. Counselors should organize intervention programmes and offer accordingly to assist first year students who have problems in coping with the demands and challenges that could create stress, tension, and fear of failure, emotional problems and other psychological problems. In addition, counselors should assist students in adapting themselves to university campus life and to help them to increase their institutional and academic commitment.

4. Although the university authority have been working with Telecommunication Corporation and Electric Power Corporation to reduce the inconsistency of electric power and to establish public phones around/in the university campus compound the problems could not be solved yet. Therefore, these problems still need special attention.
5. University should open another registrar office at Goba Campus (Madawalabu University second campus) to eliminate problems that students are facing while going to the main campus for any reasons related to registrar.
6. To reduce physical and emotional problems that students faced, University's Health Center (clinic) should widen health service provided to students and should perform various activities (seminar, workshops, etc.) to increase students consciousness and knowledge about their health.
7. Finally, this is cross-sectional study; studying students' academic adjustment by this research design therefore limited researcher to see academic adjustment progresses that students can possess through the semesters. Thus, a future research on this area is suggested to carry out using longitudinal design.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A
Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies
Institute of Educational Research

Questionnaire

Code _____

Dear student:

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data from first year university students to investigate their academic adjustment problems. Therefore, this study can be successfully accomplished only when you complete all the items honestly and frankly. Be sure that, information that you provide will be kept highly confidential and thus, you are not required to write your name.

The questionnaire has five different parts. The first part is about your general demographic background; the second part is about academic adjustment; the third part is about the social adjustment; the fourth is deal with personal-emotional adjustment, and finally about institutional commitment.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation!

Part Two: Academic Adjustment Scales

Direction: The following statements describe about your university experiences. Read each one carefully and tick (✓) in front of each under one of the five scales that best describes your level of agreement with the statement. **NB:** Strongly Disagree (**SD**), Disagree (**D**), Undecided (**UD**), Agree (**A**), Strongly Agree (**SA**).

No	Items	SD	D	UD	A	SA
1	I have clear academic goals and purposes.					
2	Getting a university degree is very important for me.					
3	I have been having doubts regarding the value of a university education.					
4	I am enjoying my academic work at university.					
5	I have been keeping up to date on my academic work.					
6	I am not working as hard as I should at my course work.					
7	I really have not had much motivation for studying.					
8	I am attending classes regularly.					
9	I am finding academic work at university is difficult.					
10	I am satisfied with my academic experience at this university.					
11	I have not been using my study time efficiently.					
12	I am satisfied with doing assignments for the courses.					
13	Recently I have had concentration problem when I try to study.					
14	I have difficulty of taking lecture notes.					
15	I am having a lot trouble getting started on homework assignments.					
16	I am satisfied with the number and variety of courses available at this university.					
17	I am satisfied with the quality of courses available at university.					
18	I am satisfied with my program of courses for this semester.					
19	I am very satisfied with the instructors I have now in my courses.					
20	I am quite satisfied with the department I belongs to.					

Part Three: Social Adjustment Scales

Direction: The following statements describe about your university experiences. Read each one carefully and tick (✓) in front of each under one of the five scales that best describes your level of agreement with the statement. **NB:** Strongly Disagree (**SD**), Disagree (**D**), Undecided (**UD**), Agree (**A**), Strongly Agree (**SA**).

No	Items	SD	D	UD	A	SA
1	I feel that I fit in well as part of the university environment.					
2	I am very involved with social activities at this university.					
3	I am adjusting well to this university.					
4	I have several close social relationships at this university.					
5	I am confident about my social skills.					
6	I am satisfied with the extent to which I am participating in social activities at university.					
7	I am good at working with other people at this university.					
8	I am meeting as many people, and making as many friends as I would like at this university.					
9	I have had informal (outside classroom), personal contacts with university instructors concerning my academic issues.					
10	I feel free to communicate with my classmate.					
11	I am having difficulty feeling to mix with other people at university.					
12	I find it difficult to ask some other people for information.					
13	There is always someone at university with whom I can talk about any problems I may have.					
14	Being alone from home is a source of difficulty for me now.					
15	I often doubt about whether other people like to be with me.					
16	I am satisfied with living in a university dormitory.					
17	I am satisfied with the extracurricular activities available at this university.					
18	I feel relaxed even if unfamiliarity in social situations is there.					

Part Four: Person-Emotional Adjustment Scales

Direction: The following statements describe about your university experiences. Read each one carefully and tick (√) in front of each under one of the five scales that best describes your level of agreement with the statement. **NB:** Strongly Disagree (**SD**), Disagree (**D**), Undecided (**UD**), Agree (**A**), Strongly Agree (**SA**).

No	Items	SD	D	UD	A	SA
1	I have been feeling tense or nervous.					
2	I have been feeling sad and unstable a lot.					
3	Independently, taking responsibility for myself is difficult for me.					
4	I have been able to control my emotion very well.					
5	I have given a lot of thought recently to whether I should ask for help form the Psychological/Counseling Services Center.					
6	I have been getting angry too easily.					
7	I worry a lot about my life (experiences) in this campus.					
8	I am experiencing a lot of difficulty coping with the stresses.					
9	I have felt tired much of the time.					
10	My appetite has been good recently.					
11	Recently, I have been having a lot of headaches.					
12	I have lost too much weight recently.					
13	I have not been sleeping very well recently.					
14	I have been feeling in good health recently.					
15	I am worry of my success in university					

Appendix B

Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate Studies

Institute of Educational Research

Interview guides

Dear Sir/Madam:

The purpose of this interview is to collect data from resourceful individual like you on the first year university students, to investigate their academic adjustment problems. Therefore, this study can be successfully accomplished only when you provide me information honestly and frankly. Be sure that, information that you provide will be kept highly confidential and used for the purpose of research only.

1. What are the major problems that first year students have been facing in this university?
2. How could these problems affect their academic adjustment?
3. How do you compare males and females students on their academic adjustment?
4. What measures have been taken to help first year students in their academic adjustment?
5. How can you describe your informal interactions with first year students concerning academic adjustment?
6. What could you suggest to bring about overall better academic adjustment of first year students in this university?
7. Is there anything else that you would like to add regarding first year students academic adjustment?

Appendix C

Summary of 2010/2011 students placement in Madawalabu University by Region

Code	Region	Number of students			
		Male	Female	Total	Percent
1	Tigray	34	28	62	3.0
2	Afar	11	7	18	0.9
3	Ahmara	104	56	160	7.6
4	Oromia	1120	324	1444	68.8
5	Somale	55	10	65	3.1
6	Benishangul	33	9	42	2.0
7	SNNP	128	43	171	8.2
8	Harar	5	0	5	0.2
9	Addis Ababa	53	70	123	5.9
10	Dire Dawa	5	3	8	0.4
Grand Total		1548	550	2098	100.0

Source: Madawalabu University Registrar 2010

DECLARATION

I the undersigned, declared that this thesis is my original work, has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been properly acknowledged.

Name: Teshome Sirak

Signature: 

Date: 28/03/2011

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a University Advisor.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____