

**AN EXPLORATION OF ACCULTURATION AMONG FIRST YEAR COLLEGE
STUDENTS: A CASE OF BACHELOR OF EDUCATION STUDENTS IN
SOCIAL STUDIES.**

M.Ed. (SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION) THESIS

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UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

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By

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DECLARATION

I the undersigned hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used acknowledgements have been made.

Full Legal Name

Signature

Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis represents the student's own work and effort and has been submitted with our approval.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving husband, Harry Chikwapula.

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ABSTRACT

First year students just like elsewhere undergo overwhelming culture change that at times makes them to question their decision of attaining higher education. Based on the Oberg's (1960) U-curve theory of adjustment to the new culture, this study explores the acculturation process among first year students in one of the Universities in Malawi. The study addresses issues through an interpretive paradigm, a case study design and qualitative methodology. It uses a sample size of 13 respondents consisting of 5 college authorities and 8 first year students majoring in Social Studies. The study uses Purposive sampling to select the sampled participants. Data is generated using documentary analysis and in-depth interviews. The study reveals that the acculturation process affects students' adaptation to the college culture because, regardless of the feelings of independence that they have once they start college, First Year students encounter several overwhelming experiences that make them fail to negotiate their expectations with the reality of college life. The findings have an implication on policy makers, incoming first year students, and college authorities when understanding and dealing with academic and social issues of college life in Malawi.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

SN	Special Needs
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter forms the basis of the study by providing the background and history of the research. It also contains the problem statement and purpose of the study. In addition, it addresses the significance of the study in order for the reader to be knowledgeable of the gap that the study closes. The chapter also contains research questions both main and sub research questions.

1.2 Background and History

According to Ezewu (1983), education is one of the social institutions through which human society organizes, directs and executes the multifarious activities required to satisfy human needs. He further argues that, education provides the opportunity for the physical, mental and spiritual development of every individual.

Due to the value of education, most countries have now made university education accessible to all the different socio-economic groups unlike earlier times (Chidzonga, 2014). According to Omachinski (2014), every year, thousands of students head off to College with hopes of earning degrees, diplomas, and certificates. Research has produced a rich body of work and health debate about the experiences of first year students at a University (Barnes, 2014). According to Nester (2016), Student success is fundamentally determined by experiences that shape a student's first year of college. She furthermore stated that, the first-year experience consist of many components: programs, course or seminars, activities, learning communities, and living

environments. Omaschinski (2014) found that, many students find their transition to college difficult for the first time because most of them feel a sense of not belonging to the group for the first time. He further argued that, such difficulties emerge because each university enacts a unique culture that students learn and adapt to through the transition process in the first year.

According to Mascionis (1997), culture is a set of beliefs, values, symbols, rituals, fashions, etiquette, food and art that unite a particular society. Through learning culture, students learn symbols, and signals that are vehicles for the transmission of information (Lenski, 1970). Haralambos & Holborn (2008) said that, culture determines how members of society think and feel, it directs their actions and defines their outlook on life. Culture also defines accepted ways of behaving for members of a particular society.

First Year students are to conform to the college culture that is expected of them. Knox (2008) said that, students of all diverse groups experience some form of potential isolation and frustration at the university because they fail to meet the university's expectations of them. However, studies have shown that, involvement in the campus community during the transition from high school to colleges helps students negotiate the cultural change more effectively (Omanchiski, 2014). Omaschinski (2014), pointed out acculturation as part of the transition from high school to college.

Acculturation is the culture change that occurs when two populations come into contact, (Sam, & Berry, 2006). Acculturation on the individual level require adaptation to behavior, customs, values and tasks that are typically of another cultural group and

mainly the dominant society (Sam & Berry, 2006). This means that, the social status plays a role on how students adapt to the school environment, because acculturation is assumed to proceed more smoothly when the difference between two cultures is small (Sam & Berry, 2006). According to Redd (2016) the dominant culture is that of the people coming from the upper class or middle class. Therefore, students in the school setup are to adapt to the dominant culture which is of the upper class. Failure to acculturate to the dominant culture has negative implications. Sam & Berry (2006), commented that, a failed acculturation in school results in relatively poor academic achievement, low levels of wellbeing and eventual dropping out of school.

The sampled college is one of the places which gives a student the opportunity to expand the horizons of knowledge within Malawi and the immediate region. The main reason for its establishment was to meet the economic and cultural needs of Malawians (University of Malawi, 2001). The sampled college is one of the six public universities and students are selected using the harmonized merit-based public universities selection exercise coordinated by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), (CERT, 2007). Students are selected from each of the districts in Malawi hence students come from diverse backgrounds. The college accommodates all students from the North, Central and Southern region of Malawi hence students come from diverse backgrounds, ethnicity and language. So far, the total population of people in Malawi is 17, 563, 749 of which 2, 286, 960 are the people from the north, 7, 526, 160 are from the central region and 7, 750, 629 are from south (National Statistical Office, 2018). Students from all these three regions come to college with their own ways of life. Students who are selected into the University of Malawi also face socio economic differences depending on the social classes that they belong to. Such a difference in social class makes some

students rich in cultural capital whilst others, deficient of it. Barnes (2014), defined cultural capital as a form of embodied personality traits and mannerisms, material goods, and credentials.

1.3 Problem Statement

The longing to attain higher education in Malawi is highly increasing among many Malawian young citizens. Every year, thousands of students study hard to sit for the Malawi National Examinations with an aim of getting selected to competitive public colleges. So far 80,340 males and 72,249 female candidates registered to sit for the Malawi School Certificate of Education that run from 30th August to 22nd September, 2022 (www.maneb.edu.mw).

Therefore, with this huge competition for limited space in college, being selected is exciting and makes one start imagining how life would be at the college. Regardless of the differences that first year students have, they all undergo through the acculturation process. Successful acculturation leads to high academic performance, high retention rate and healthy self-esteem while a failed acculturation in school results in relatively poor academic achievement, low levels of wellbeing and eventual dropping out of school (Sam & Berry, 2007). Several studies have been done outside Malawi to find out how students acculturate from rural to urban areas (Pheko et. al, 2014); the adjustment of first generational students into College (Redd, 2016); and the ability to persist in a college environment (Jewett ,2008; and Kahn, 2016). However the researcher did not find any study that was conducted in Malawi on the issue of acculturation of first year college students. It is for this reason that the researcher explored acculturation among First Year college students in Malawi.

1.4 Research Questions

1.4.1 The main research question

The main research question was exploratory in nature and it was: What are the acculturation experiences among First Year college students?

1.4.2 Sub-research questions:

- (a) What are the acculturation processes among First Year Students?
- (b) What are the common effects of students' acculturation process amongst first year students?
- (b) How do first year students cope with the effects of their acculturation process?

1.5 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore acculturation among the First Year students in the sampled college.

1.6. Significance of the study

The research finding contribute towards theory and body of literature, policy and context of practice. First, the study could be an eye opener to Malawi as a country especially through the Ministry of Education on what students pass through during their time in higher education as they are trying to adapt to the new environment. Through that, the Ministry of Education could formulate policies that could help other upcoming First Year students survive in the College environment. Implementation of the policy has the potential of reducing many academic, behavioral and emotional challenges that occur due to negative effects of acculturation in different Colleges in Malawi. The study is also helpful to theory in such a way that, the findings would either improve or challenge the theory upon coming up with the findings in the field. Furthermore, the

study would add to literature for other Malawian researchers on the subject of acculturation because there is a knowledge gap about acculturation amongst college students in Malawi. In the context of practice the study would help raise awareness of the effects of acculturation amongst college students. In return, the colleges and the government of Malawi will come up with strategies of helping students survive in the college environment.

The study was guided by Oberg's (1960) U-Curve theory of adjustment to the new culture. The U-Curve theory concentrates on the four stages of adjustment; honeymoon, culture shock, adjustment, and adaptation. Oberg's (1960) U-Curve theory of adjustment has been well elaborated in Chapter 2 of the study.

1.7 Definition of terms and concepts

This section defines the concepts or terms used in this thesis as follows:

Acculturation: The transferring of culture from one group of people to another group in response to contact with another, (Koo et al, 2021). It is not a uniform process, it varies according to the range of strategies adopted by individuals who are immersed in cultural change and the social context of the host culture (Berry, 2005).

Honeymoon: A feeling of excitement and joy that new comers have in the new environment before experiencing any unfamiliar way of life (Oberg, 1960).

Culture Shock: This refers to a personal anxiety that comes from experiencing an unfamiliar way of life such as differences in values, language and even dressing (Oberg, 1960).

Adjustment: This is an active process of learning and coming to terms with the new culture by managing stress that comes with culture shock (Zhou et al, 2008).

Adaptation: The process of change by which an organism or species becomes better suited to its environment, (Hornby, 2012)

Social Integration: This refers to the extent to which a student feels connected to the college environment, peers, faculty and others in college and is involved in campus activities (Barnes, 2014)

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the background of the study in order to form the basis of the whole study. The theoretical framework, problem statement, purpose of the study and significance of the study has helped in contextualizing the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter overview

This chapter discusses different literature pertaining to acculturation of college students into college culture and environment. The structure of the chapter is guided by the research questions and the theoretical framework that guided the study. Lastly, it concludes the chapter.

2.2 The concept of Acculturation

Acculturation entails the transferring of culture from one group of people to another group in response to contact with another, (Koo et al., 2021). Traditionally the term acculturation, refereed to a process of assimilation, where immigrants would acquire the practices of their new receiving culture and would simultaneously discard the practices of their cultural heritage, (Schwartz et al., 2021). However, in the 21st century, the multidimensional nature of acculturation has been reduced with institutions viewing international students as a sources of both revenue and diverse cultural exposure rather than individuals to be assimilated, (Koo et al., 2021). Berry (2005), defined acculturation as a dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members (Berry, 2005).

It is a reciprocal, multidimensional process that affects individuals through re-socialization, (Ma et al, 2020). According to Berry 2005, acculturation occurs both at group and individual levels. Group-level acculturation changes in social and institutional structures as well as cultural practices (Berry, 2005). Acculturation on the individual level, entails shifts within the individual's psychological and behavioral state

(Berry, 2005). Berry (2005), further said that, the psychological components reflects the internal aspect of adaptation which includes, beliefs, values, attitudes and expectations. The behavioral dimension pertains to the external aspects in relation how individuals adopt the host culture through social interactions (Berry, 2005).

2.2.1 Stages of Acculturation

Erkes & Law, (2000) describe four stages of acculturation which can be categorized into four H's; honeymoon, hostility, humor and home. The honeymoon stage takes place when people first arrive in an area. It is characterized by extreme happiness, sometimes even by euphoria. The second stage occurs after about four to six months when reality sets in. This is called hostility stage and it is characterized by complaining, wanting to be only with others who speak their language and rejecting anything associated with the new culture.

Humor is the third stage in acculturation. Newcomers gradually work towards resolution of their feelings and their sense of being torn between the new and the old. They begin to accept their new home, find friends and discover that there are good things about where they are living and adjust their lives by coming to terms with both the old and the new ways of living. Finally the new comers become natives since they find their new place as a home. This last stage take place after some years to come whilst for others it may never take place.

2.3 The common effects of the first year students' acculturation process.

Evidence has shown that, the acculturation process can have both positive and negative effects on First Year students. According to Omachisnski (2014), the cultural

adjustment includes social, psychological, and academic aspects of the students which may yield both positive and experiences for new students.

2.3.1 Positive effects of the first year students' acculturation process

First Year students' acculturation experiences have a lot of positive effects that students live to remember and cherish.

2.3.1.1 Sense of Belonging and pride

According to Nester (2014), the early stages of the first semester are a critical period. But First Year experiences can be an eye opener to what the college culture is all about as well as the expectations of the college on them, (Brinkworth et al., 2008). Therefore, the whole process of acculturation brings in a sense of pride and belonging. Estrey (2008), in his study on the experiences of first year students' transition at Michigan State University, found that, the First Year students reported to have a sense of belonging to college and most part of what described the Michigan State University experience was the concept of the "Spartan Family".

Estrey (2008), found that, from the moment that a student is admitted to the institution, they are inundated with images and messages about being a Spartan through both formal (orientation program) and informal channels and this promotes school pride. A sense of belonging and pride doesn't occur unless students undergo through successful social integration. According to Shaulskyly (2016), on-campus groups, and organizations are essential to the integration process because they help facilitate student's involvement. Students' feelings of belonging to the college fosters high

academic performance and retention rate among First Year students, (Shaulskyly, 2016).

2.3.1.2 Responsibility and Autonomy development

Regardless of the negative effects that come in because of First Year students separating from friends and family, acculturation helps students develop responsible and autonomy. According to Hornby (2012), being responsible means doing things you are expected to do and accepting the consequences of your actions. Autonomy on the other hand means freedom from external control or influence. Autonomy also means independence. Mapfumo and Nkoma (2013), said that entering college requires youths to face multiple transitions, including changes in their living arrangements, friendship networks, and academic environments. Most of all, it requires adapting to greater independence and responsibility in their personal and academic lives. Mapfumo and Nkoma (2013), further stated that, in college, students move from a dependent to an independent learner; from studying in the monitored environment with a highly regulated timetable to students learning to manage their own time and to individuals who make decisions in a more adult and responsible manner. Such major transitions are essential for First Year students.

According to Blimling (2010), college life experiences allow an individual to develop into an adult because college offers students an opportunity to socialize with a variety of people and model the roles of a variety of different life styles. This, therefore, brings with it increased responsibility on the part of the freshman such as decision making about what to eat, what to buy and when to schedule for classes (Mapfumo and Nkoma, 2013). Blimling (2010) further stated that, college life experiences also help individuals

take responsibility and consequences of their actions. This means that every action they may do whether bad or good they are to hold themselves accountable hence they learn to make responsible decisions. He added that that, the interaction of students living together provides regular feedback to the individual, time for reflection and introspection. Even though students may be tied up by a lot of assignments, college helps in thinking independently and reflect on what others students' feedback of you.

Furthermore, Blimling (2010) said that, college experiences allow one confront a wide range of emotions not as children but as adults. The process of managing emotions is actually about increasing awareness of feelings and learning how to understand and trust these feelings. And the only way this can be accomplished is by experiencing these emotions, receiving feedback on them and integrating this information into the self-concept. According to Padgert, 2011, college experiences help one gain responsibility not only to the individual benefit but to the society. College experiences also provide students with ability to develop autonomy. According to Blimling (2010), the process of autonomy for college students is a process of breaking away from parents emotionally and financially. Blimling (2010), however explained that, college both helps and hinders autonomy because it allows students to move away from home, free from parental control but it hinders maturation because, parents still play a role in financially supporting the students. Blimling (2010) concluded that, it is only after people become financially responsible for themselves can they become mature to the point of interdependence.

2.3.2 Negative effects of the First Year students' acculturation process

According to McNamara (2012), each university enacts a unique culture that new students learn and adapt. However, all students regardless of background, experience challenges in the process of learning the new culture (Mindrup, 2012).

2.3.2.1 Cultural Shock

Oberg (1960) introduced the concept of culture shock describing it as an occupational disease, the anxiety that results from losing all of our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. Mascionis (1997) defined culture shock as a personal disorientation that comes from experiencing an unfamiliar way of life. Shock on the other hand is the stimulus for acquisition of culture-specific skills that are required to engage in new social interactions, (Zhou et al. 2008).

The move to a new environment is one of the most traumatic events in a person's life and in most newcomers culture shock is inevitable, (Brown & Holloway, 2008). However, not every new comer may experience trauma in a new environment, (Mapfumo & Nkoma, 2013). Zhou et al. (2008) said that, although students understand the concept of going to school, once in college, life is much different and requires greater change. Pheko et al. (2014), said that, living away from family is not easy as it means not having the family's daily support such as managing finances, monitoring studies and helping to manage time. The campus culture, students' personal background and experiences, resources available and each individual situation all affect how college students adapt to life on their own, (Omachiski, 2014). According to Owusu et al. (2014), the newness of the college culture at this stage begins to wear off, and students begin to deal with the reality of all and the diversity that comes with meeting people

from different backgrounds and cultures. He further said that, homesickness may increase and this is a period of positive change and a period of intense personal conflict and anxiety.

Culture shock differs among students from different backgrounds. Kahn (2016) said that, First Year College students from rural communities face adversity in adjusting to college because a lot of things such as dressing styles, language or vocabulary is new. Pheko et al. (2014), in their study on acculturation experiences among university students in Botswana found that students who came from rural areas indicated awkwardness that came with witnessing city dwellers not speaking politely to their lectures as they were taught by their parents to respect elders (Lecturers are elders). The research also revealed that, some First Year students from the village also found it difficult to come to terms with the way city dwellers especially women dressed because some were wearing clothes that were too short and some showing private parts like cleavages. Pheko et al. (2014), also discovered that, for most students from the rural, the culture of not greeting each other at school was also a culture shock and most students from the rural reported to have been laughed at as they were trying to greet a stranger. According to Nailevna (2016), cultural shock which includes the unfamiliar cultural values, customs and expectations in the new environment provokes acculturative stress. And acculturative stress encompasses, physical, psychological, financial, spiritual, social, and language dimensions.

2.3.2.2 Acculturative stress

Allison (2015) states that, adjustment to college life can be overwhelming to any First Year student because it entails moving from one's hometown, maneuvering huge

campuses, encountering thousands of students, enrolling in auditorium-sized classes, and adjusting to impersonal relationships with faculty and staff. Therefore, lack of academic and social support and loss of a sense of belonging can lead to stress and anxiety.

According to McNamara (2012), stress is a state of physiological arousal that results when an external demand, called a stressor, exceeds an individual's capacity to cope with the demand. However, stress is a normal part of life, especially during period of transition and uncertainty (www.TransitionYear.org). In order to deal with the problematic aspect of acculturation, the concepts of acculturative stress was proposed (Sam & Berry, 2006).

Sam & Berry (2006) said that, acculturative stress is a response by people to life events that are rooted in intercultural contact. The term acculturative stress has been investigated among various mobile populations (Yu et al., 2014). Sam & Berry (2006) described the notion of acculturative stress as broadly similar to that of culture shock by Oberg (1960). Sam & Berry (2006) preferred the term acculturative stress because within this frame of reference, people are seen as potentially able to deal effectively with stressors in their lives and to achieve adaptation ranging from very negative through to very positive.

There are several factors that, may stress up a First Year student. According to a study done by Ramteke & Ansari (2016) found that, high school fees, moving to a new environment and new examination pattern with frequent assignments, class tests and

failure to manage time to study lead to acculturative stress among First Year college students.

Acculturative stress is also as a result of less or no knowledge about college life which leads to students having higher expectations of college life. Garza (2015), as an instructor, heard so many students saying “if only I had known about (this or that), could have made my life easier”. The knowledge gap about the expected behavior in social situations or information about accommodations and activities result in acculturative stress due to a mismatch between reality and expectations (Garza, 2015).

2.3.2.3 Mismatch between reality and Expectations

According to Chidzonga, (2014), students who plan to go to the university have difficulty envisaging university life and accurately predicting their experience. The challenge is that, the reality of the First Year students at university tends to be mismatched by their pre-transfer aspirations which creates difficulty in adapting to higher education. According to Karen (2014), there is an expectations-experience gap among First Year students in their initial entry to college. Stern (1966) in his research about First Year students, introduced the notion of “Fresh Man myth” to describe the phenomenon of First Year students having unrealistically high expectations of what their college experience would entail. Kelloway & Holdway (1987), found that, the big difference between student’s expectations before attending college with reality is mainly related to: large campus and class sizes, inadequate preparation in high school, harder workloads, the difficulty of getting good grades, and differences between school and university teachers in teaching methodology. Miller et al. (2005) said that, there are high consequences for unmet expectations because disappointed students fail to

optimize their college experience, leave institutions, or even abandon higher education. Therefore, Garza (2015) advised that, if students had realistic expectations of what they will encounter their anxiety could lessen.

2.3.2.4 Acculturative stress levels and its effects

Different categories of First Year students differ in stress levels. According to a study done by Allison (2015), first-generational students, low social-economic status students and students with disabilities had stress levels that were much higher than average. For example, First-generational students often experience feelings of inadequacy or fear of judgment, due to their home environment and school environment carrying connotations of inferiority and superiority respectively, (Redd, 2016). Students from low economic status on the other hand meet financial problems which may lead into stress (Ramteke & Ansari, 2016). Students with disabilities are highly affected by academic performance which according to research may result in the reduction of memory capacity (Allison, 2016).

Acculturative stress affects First Year students in many ways, according to Malincrodt (2006) First Year students due to acculturative stress experience poor social integration, problems in daily life tasks, homesickness, role conflict, academic concerns, depression, physiological symptom, issues with self-esteem and difficulties in cultural adjustment. Yu et al. (2014), further said that, stress may lead to a number of health problems such as depression, substance abuse, eating disorders, suicide and cancers.

2.3.2.5 Financial challenges (stress).

Financial stress is that stress that stems from a person's dissatisfaction with their financial situation (Vaughn 2013). Vaughn (2013), also described financial stress as the subjective, unpleasant feeling that one is unable to meet financial demands, afford the necessities of life and have sufficient funds to make ends meet.

Fosnacht & Dong (2013) in their study on financial stress and its impact on First Year college experiences found that four of the five most common stressors among students related to their personal finances. And First Year students more frequently experienced extreme or high stress related to the cost of living than other students. In a study by Ross et al. (2006), on debt, stress, and academic performance of medical school students in the United Kingdom, respondents rated money as the second largest most significant cause of stress following course work. Millet (2010), in his study found that, most First Year students from low economic status, experience financial challenges compared to their fellow counterparts.

According to Lim et al. (2010), financial stress has led to academic failure among First Year College students. According to Vaughn (2013), financial stress is not a sole determinant of academic outcomes however when financial hardships present as a significant challenge to students' sense of stability and adaptive capacities, the socio economic status of the general student body and the ranking of the institution should also be take into account. Jewett (2008) also found that the higher levels of persistence was directly related to issues of finances. Financial challenges negatively affect students' wellbeing because due to lack of finances, students face problems such as

health, accommodation, and food, (Otlu, 2010). Lim et al. (2010), also discovered that financial stress has been associated with suicide risk among college students.

2.3.2.6 Academic challenges, Language barrier& low self-esteem.

It is the goal of each student to succeed academically at college. However, success is as a result of academic adjustment. According to Ahmad (2016), academic adjustment measures how well the First Year students manage to meet the educational demands of the university experiences. However it's not easy for every First Year student to academically adjust. Academic challenges and language barrier affect the first Year students' acculturation process, (Messidor & Sly, 2016).

According to Chidzonga (2014), First Year students' background matters in the way they would academically adjust. Burgess (2009), in her study also, found that, First Year students who are coming from backgrounds that are culturally different from the main dominant culture face additional challenges in adjusting to the academic environment. For example, international students' achievement is affected by English proficiency, academic skills and educational background (Ahmad, 2016). Wu et al. (2015) on international students' challenges, elaborated that, international students find it hard to communicate with their lecturers due to language barrier as college language or vocabulary is different. In her study, Garza (2015), on international students, found that, many newcomers find it hard to express their opinions both orally in class and in writing since many students came from countries where teachers did most of the talking and the language was different.

The study also revealed that, students felt that they needed more help with their pronunciation as many of their friends could not understand them. Garza (2015), also highlighted that, students from all non-English speaking backgrounds find difficulties in working out classroom activities that were language based such as presentations and group work which made other members in the group gain a lesser grade because of them. Pheko et al. (2014), also in his study on rural to urban migration acculturation experiences, found that, participants from rural areas found English speaking as a challenge when they found city dwellers speaking nice English.

First Year students also struggle to learn the vocabulary of higher education. Omachinki (2014), said that, professionals working on college campuses use vocabulary unfamiliar to new incoming students causing confusion and misunderstanding therefore first year students need to speak the language of higher education. Such college vocabulary include; registrar, research, transcript, tuition, Grade Point Average (GPA), major, minor and semester (Garza, 2015).

Accessing learning materials and adapting to teaching and learning style in college also affects First Year students' academic success. In a study by Chidzonga (2014), found that, First Year students had problems in accessing library facilities, completing assignments and sticking to time table demands. Chidzonga (2014) further said that the difference in teaching and learning between high school and college might be a source of frustration to many first Year students. According to Mapfumo & Nkoma (2013), students may face challenges in teaching styles of the lectures because, in professors in college are less personal and quite unsettling whilst high school teachers are more caring and personal. However, balancing academic responsibilities, work, social life

and adjusting to the new academic environment are some of the factors that may help First Year students to academically succeed, (Ahmad, 2016).

Failure to academically excel in the First Year of College, affects students' academic self-esteem. According to Tahir (2010), First Year students experience certain levels of declination in self-esteem judgments due to high academic stress and anxiety. In his study, Mudhovozi (2012), found that, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, had low self-esteem and could not ask the lecturers to clarify some academic issues because of lack of proficiency in speaking English being the official language of Communication during classes. Finch (2010) found that, students coming from poor backgrounds could not persist in college compared to other First Year students because of low self-esteem.

2.3.2.7 Social Challenges (drug & substance abuse, unhealthy sexual relationships)

First Year College students are affected by social challenges in college which include, drug & substance abuse, including unhealthy sexual relationships, and harassing dressing styles. According to Madden & Allan (2011), alcohol consumption, and sex acts are some of the hazing practices common across student groups. Research found that, college students make up one of the largest groups of drug and substance abuser and those who are enrolled in a full time college program are twice more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol than those who don't attend (www.addictioncenter.com). Pilon et al. (2005) in their study in a Brazilian University, found that, there was high usage of drugs and alcohol among First Year student population. The study also revealed that, alcohol was the psychoactive substance that was reported to be most used by the students.

The high rates of drug and substance abuse can be attributed to; stress (as students face the high demands of coursework and other social obligations), course load (More students take stimulants to help them stay awake long enough to study and complete assignments by their due date), curiosity and peer pressure, (www.addictioncenter.com).

Alcohol and drug abuse have their side effects, Pilon et al. (2005) revealed that, students who drink heavily are more likely to engage in high risk physical, emotional, and sexual behaviors with negative consequences such as accidents, and impaired sexual health.

Unhealthy sexual relationships have lasting effects. Vasilenko et al. (2012) stipulates that, consequences of sex differ from one gender to the other. The study found that even though both male and female students experienced physical pleasure, female students were affected more negatively because apart from physical pleasure they engaged in sex for relational reasons hence they revealed depressive symptoms when their needs were not met. Devito (2012), found that, unhealthy relationships may also lead to anxiety, lowered self-esteem, eating disorders, substance abuse, somatization, suicidal ideation, and lowered academic performance.

2.4 How students cope with the effects of their acculturation process

2.4.1 College Social Support Services: Campus Guidance and Counselling

According to Mapfumo and Nkoma (2013), guidance is part and parcel of the total education process offered ideally by competent and trained guidance counsellors with

a view to enabling students to understand their own characteristics and potentialities and to relate more satisfactorily to social requirements and opportunities in accord with extant social and moral values. Mapfumo and Nkoma (2013), explained that, guidance and counselling has two distinct but complementary elements. The first is the provision of responsive services (counselling) which are directed at meeting students' needs as they emerge throughout the students' lives and the second is offered through the development of a curricular program (guidance) which is developmental, preventative and appropriate to the needs of the students and is delivered seamlessly in a whole school context.

Guidance and counselling benefits a lot of First Year students. Mapfumo and & Nkoma (2013), in their study found that, counselling programs assist students' academic performance in college. Perna (2008), on the other hand appraised counselling for reducing the number of people withdrawing from college and also in fostering decision making and problem solving skills. Mapfumo and& Nkoma (2013), recommended that counselling that is needed in college has to do with careers, personal or social matters, stress and anger management, time management and matters of substance abuse. Guidance and counseling is an ongoing process, and one way through which the college offers guidance and counselling to first year college students in a formal way is through the orientation program.

2.4.1.1 Orientation programs

Orientations are of great importance to first year college students. Nester (2016) said that, orientation programs are means through which the higher education institutions use in order to aid transition and integration to college. According to Caplain (2008),

orientation is an institution's main opportunity to introduce and integrate new students into the campus community and culture, form class and institutional identity and prepare students to begin classes. Therefore, an orientation program that begins prior to departure and continuing upon arrival helps students acculturate, (Garza, 2015).

During the orientations, new students are familiarized on the campus, introduced student organizations and activities and fostered on academic and social integration, (Nester, 2016). Robinson et al. (1996), said that, College orientations helps students make adjustments to college life and also aids them to establish the expectations, knowledge and behaviors that can lead to attaining their academic goals. Orientations also offer an opportunity to make new friends to alleviate the stress of moving away from home without knowing anyone, (Omaschiski, 2014). As students become more involved in campus opportunities due to orientation; they begin to have realistic views of the University, therefore, the original home culture becomes somewhat foreign since there is less dependence on parents and former peers (Owusu et al., 2014). Orientations also give emphasis to connect key first-year and administration staff with students as well as connecting first-year cohort with another, (Larmar & Ingamells, 2010). A true sense of acceptance, integration and connectedness occurs when students have successfully adapted to the new learning environment through orientation (Owusu et al., 2014).

2. 4.2. Social integration and social networks.

Another way through which students cope with the effects of acculturation is through social integration or networking. Barnes, (2014) defined social integration as the extent to which a student feels connected to the college environment, peers, faculty and others

in college and is involved in campus activities. According to Garza (2015), newcomers when faced with effects of the acculturation process, turn to their social networks for support. Garza (2015) described social networks as important in boosting one's level of social capital. She further defined social capital as an investment in relationships with expected returns therefore higher social capital leads to high self-esteem and satisfaction with life. College students have often moved far enough away from family members so as to not be able to depend on them, therefore the campus connections and support with friends play a key developmental role for students (Bronkema, 2014).

The positive benefits of peer interaction are powerful and diverse, (Bronkema, 2014). According to Karen (2014), students who are engaged and feel a sense of connectedness to the university through social experiences outside the classroom are more likely to persist and graduate. Karen (2014) further said that, high student involvement, interactions with peers, and experiences in curricular activities have shown to increase academic success and student satisfaction. According to Bryant (2007), social integration including student-to-student interactions and developing friendships on campus, is a positive predictor of a number of college outcomes including emotional health, leadership development, academic development, cultural awareness and satisfaction. He further argued that, residence halls, learning communities and student organizations are ideal environments for students to form friendship and learn from one another. Omaschinski (2014) also said that, students require social networks to traverse the college experience successfully.

According to Bronkema (2014), not all friendships are equal in their value and influence since not all relationships are maintained equally in regard to the levels of intimacy and frequency of contact. The narrower the social group, the more intimate the connection. And the narrowest of the groups is the support cliques. Bronkema (2014) describes the support cliques as individuals from whom one would seek advice, support, or help in times of severe emotional or financial distress.

Another way through which students can socially integrate is through social media. Garza (2015) found that social networking sites are a way of generating and maintaining social capital because users have the ability to find and socialize with friends. Lampe et al. (2006), found that, First Year students used Facebook to connect with fellow students that, they met on campus. Therefore, social relationships predominantly moved from offline to on-line. According to Barnes (2014) social integration is about building community so that learners learn from one another, collaborate, feel safe to experiment, and be prepared for a workplace that is increasingly more team based. He further said that, if First Year students are to cope with their acculturation effects, there is need for them to understand academic expectations and begin to integrate socially into their new environment by making friends with classmates and talking to staff (Barnes, 2014). In order to broadly explain and predict the issue of acculturation, the researcher sought for a theoretical framework.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Creswell (2009) defined a theory as an interrelated set of constructs or variables formed into prepositions or hypotheses that specify the relationship among variables. He further

said that a research might appear in a research study as an argument, a discussion, or a rational and it helps to explain or predict phenomena that occur in the world. Given (2008), on the other hand defined theoretical framework as any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social or psychological processes at a variety of levels that can be applied to the understanding of phenomena. There are two theories of acculturation that have been widely used Lysgaard's theory and Oberg's culture shock theory, (Garza, 2015). The current study looked at Oberg's U-curve theory of adjustment to the new culture.

2.5.1 Oberg's (1960) U-Curve theory of Cultural adjustment

The study embraced Oberg' (1960) U-curve theory of cultural adjustment to the new culture. U-Curve theory of adjustment to the new culture was developed by Oberg (1960). Oberg (1960) came up with a theoretical perspective of how new-comers adapt to the new culture or place through four stages of adjustment; honeymoon, culture shock, adjustment & mastery. From Oberg's (1960) perspective, during the honeymoon stage, new comers are excited and many may feel like they have adjusted to the new culture. Culture shock is the second phase in the theory of adjustment. Oberg (1960), where newcomers are confronted with reality and start complaining. Oberg (1960), in his remarks about culture shock, said that, newcomers experience frustration and anxiety when all or most of their familiar cues are removed. He further illustrated that at this point, the new comer feels like a fish out of water. Oberg's (1960) third stage is that of adjustment and it occurs when newcomers make a decision to transition to the new environment. And at last, they reach a mastery stage, where a newcomer is thought to have adjusted.

First Year college experiences are diverse and unique however through Oberg's (1960) phases of adjustment to the new culture, one may find a pattern on how most of the first year students may feel, once they start college life. Oberg's 1960 theory of cultural adjustment will also guide the researcher to the most important issues that need to be examined and the people that need to be studied. Furthermore, the theory will provide lens that will shape what is looked at and the questions asked (Creswel, 2009).

2.4 Chapter Summary

The Existing literature found, helped the researcher familiarize with what other authors had written about the common effects of the acculturation process among first year college students and how students cope with the effects of the their acculturation process. From each research question, several themes and subthemes were identified. The positive effects of acculturation are a sense of belonging and responsibility. Whilst acculturative stress, financial stress, academic challenges and social challenges are the negative effects of acculturation. The previous findings also revealed that, first year students cope with the effects of acculturation by seeking college social support services, and social integration.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter Overview

The chapter outlines and describes the study approach. The chapter also discusses the theoretical paradigm that guided the choice of the research design and methodology for the study. It presents the research design used and qualitative approach employed. The chapter also explains the research protocols for the sampling method applied and how they were used in the study. Details of the methods used to generate data will be discussed and the role of the researcher. The part of the chapter presents how data was analyzed and managed once it was generated from the field. Issues of credibility, trustworthiness and ethical issues of the study have also been taken into consideration.

3.1 Research Paradigm

A paradigm is a world view or, a whole framework of beliefs, values and methods within which research takes place, (Creswell, 2009). The study employed an interpretive paradigm for the framework of the study. An interpretive paradigm involves researchers to interpret elements of the study and integrates human interest into a study (Myers, 2008). Researchers using this paradigm believe that there can be multiple realities or truths. Therefore, reality needs to be interpreted (Creswell, 2009). Interpretive paradigm is important because it helps a researcher to have an in-depth study of qualitative research areas such as cross-cultural differences in organizations, issues of ethics, leadership and analysis of factors impacting leadership (Myers, 2008). The major disadvantage of this paradigm is that, it is subject to bias on the side of the researcher. Primarily, the data generated in interpretive studies cannot be generalized

since data is heavily impacted by personal view point and values. Therefore, reliability and representativeness of data is undermined to a certain extent (Myers, 2008).

3.2 Research design

The study adopted a case study design. According to Chadderton & Torrance (2011), a case study is an approach to research which seeks to engage with and report the complexity of social and educational activity, in order to represent the meanings that individual social actors bring to those settings and manufacture in them. Zainal (2007) added that case studies explore and investigate contemporary real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and their relationships. All in all, case studies are a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in-depth a program, events, activity, process, or one or more individuals, (Creswell, 2009).

An exploratory case study was employed. Zainal (2007) said that, exploratory case studies set to explore any phenomenon in the data which serves as a point of interest to the researcher. The study explored the case of First Year Social Studies students on how they acculturated to the College environment.

3.3 Methodology

The study employed the qualitative research approach. Corbin (1990) assert that the qualitative approach can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known. Creswell (2009) also said that the qualitative approach is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals

or group ascribe to a social or human problem. From the study, qualitative method helped to explore how first year students acculturate to the culture of the college under study. The approach helped in uncovering the first year students' feelings when they first arrive at the campus and the challenges that they met as different students were each explaining their unique experiences of how they adapted.

According to Creswell (2009), the process of the research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participants setting. It is for this reason that the study explores the unique experiences of the first year Social Studies students. Considering issues of data saturation, a sample of 13 respondents was used. Mack et al. (2005) said that theoretical saturation is the point at which new data collected and analyzed no longer brings additional insights to the research. The researcher sort views from first year students, representatives of the student body and the staff members.

3.4 Sampling Strategy, research sites and sample size

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for the study. Among the 13 participants, 8 were students while 5 were key informants. The First Year class of Social studies was deliberately selected because it had a wider range of diversity of First Year students which was relevant in providing insights into the behavior of the wider research population. Merriam (1998) said that, sampling entails the selection of a sample from which one can learn the most to gain understanding and insight. Students were sampled in pairs in reference to their diversity. Among the 8 students were; a male and female from rural area, male and female from urban area, male and female students who had special learning needs, lastly, male and female who came to school already

married. Five key informants who were also interviewed according to different roles they play at the college. Among the five key informants were: the Office of Students' affairs, the Assistant Registrar for Social Welfare, the Students' Union president, the Special needs specialist and the Students Union special needs representative.

3.5 Data generation methods

The data for the study was generated using in-depth interviews. The interview guide was prepared in English and the participants were asked to use English or a mixture of English and Chichewa as they responded to the interview questions.

3.5.1 Data generation instruments

The purpose of data generation is to represent the variety of ways in which the research, social world and data interact in qualitative inquiry, (Given, 2008). The current study used in-depth interviews as instruments to collect data. The in-depth interviews took about 1 hour for every participant.

3.5.1.1 In-depth Interviews

According to Barbour & Schostak (2005), an interview is an extendable conversation between partners that aims at having an in-depth information about a certain topic or subject and through which a phenomenon could be interpreted in terms of the meanings interviewees bring to it. Kumar (2005), also defines an interview as a person to person interaction between two or more individuals with a specific purpose in mind. Face to face interviewed were employed across all participants in the study, starting from the first year social studies students to the key informants.

Alshenqeeti (2014) said that, the value of interviewing is not only because it builds a holistic snapshot, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants but also because it enables interviewees to speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings. The study employed semi-structured interviews because the questions were open ended, designed to explore the college experiences. Creswell (2009), described semi-structured interviews as one of the most powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings. The interviewed involved probing for further information, elaboration of responses. Semi-structured interviews permitted the researcher to address the issue of trust while maintaining a feeling of openness (Creswell, 2009).

During the interviews some of the respondents had high expectations of earning some benefits after being interviewed. But the researcher had to elaborate to every respondent that the information that will be collected will be beneficial for education purposes rather than some organization or governmental use.

3.5.2 Data Generation Instruments

The data for the study was generated using in-depth interview and document analysis guides. Each instrument played a major role in the study, hence the study will outline the relevance of each instrument.

3.5.2.1 Interview Guide

An interview guide was developed in order to correct face to face structured interviews data which were to help answer the research questions. An interview guide was

developed for the key informants which include: the office of students' affairs, the assistant registrar for social welfare, Students' Union President, the Students' Union Special Needs Representative, and the Special Needs Specialist. The interview guide was developed in order to gain information from the key people at the College about how students undergo through the acculturation process at the University. The interviews took about an hour.

A second interview guide was developed for the First Year social Studies students. The main aim of the guide was to find out how students manage through the adaptation process by using Oberg's (1960) theory of adjustment into the new culture.

3.5.2.2 Document analysis

According to Ritchie and Lewis, (2003) document analysis is the study of existing documents in order to understand their substantive content or to illuminate deeper meanings which may be revealed by their style and coverage. Creswell (2009) enlightens further that, document analysis guide involves public documents such as minutes of meetings or newspaper and private documents such as journals, diaries or letters which enables the researcher to obtain the language and worlds of participants. The method helped the researcher source out information on how college students adapt to the college environment and the effects of their acculturation process. In the current study, documents having information about college students in Malawi were so unavailable.

3.6 Data Management

According to Soler et al. (2016), data management concerns the dealing with data in the scientific context. Soler et al. (2016), further states that data management is important because it enhances security by safeguarding against data loss as storage, backups and archiving are planned; enhances quality of research since the research data and records are accurate, consistent, complete, authentic and reliable which also allows reproducibility of results and data management also helps create efficiency and access of the data.

In order to reduce risk of data loss, all audio recordings of interviews were transcribed. Transcriptions were stored in a password protected computer for purposes of data confidentiality. All respondent identifiers were removed on each transcript for the sake of anonymity. Computers were a better tool of preserving data and gave researcher ability to reanalyze data. In order to secure data and ensure privacy, participants were given pseudonyms. Participants were given pseudonyms in order to still ensure privacy of their data. The researcher's Electronic mail was used to store backup data because in case the computer crushes, data would still be retrieved.

3.7. Thematic Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). Braun & Clarke (2006), further said that, a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic data analysis has six phases.

The first phase is for the researcher to get familiar with the data. This can be done if the researcher immerses himself or herself in the data to the extent that you are with the depth and breadth of the content. This can be done through repeated reading of the data and reading the data in an active way by searching for meanings and patterns. In the current research, the researcher organized all the data from verbal to notes. The verbal data was transcribed word for word and through that, was able to start familiarizing with the data. The researcher read through the data several times and took down short notes in order to not miss any vital information for coding. After reading over and over, the researcher was able to find patterns in the data.

The second phase is through generating initial codes in order to organize data into meaningful groups. Codes identify a feature of the data that appears interesting to the analyst and refer to the most basic segment or element of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon. In the current study the researcher generated codes especially from the notes taken down during the first phase. After that, the data that was similar, was grouped in one code until a pattern was formed regarding the topic of study.

Searching for themes is the third phase. This phase re-focuses the analysis at the broader level of themes, rather than codes, and involves sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. In the current study, the codes were grouped into major themes and subthemes in reference to the topic of the study until well pattern or map of the study findings was sort.

Phase four is that of reviewing themes. This stage begins when the researcher has devised a set of candidate themes and it involves the refinement of those themes. This phase involves two levels of reviewing and refining of themes. Level one involves reviewing at the level of the coded data extracts, and if the data forms a coherent pattern then level two follows. Level two considers the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set and also whether the thematic map accurately reflects the meanings evident in the data set as a whole. The current researcher in the study, began the process of refining the themes and some themes that had almost similar data were regrouped into a single theme until the data was making sense and could be related in a pattern.

The fifth phase is that of defining and naming themes. This phase begins when you have a satisfactory thematic map of the data. The researcher defines and further refines the themes that will further be represented for analysis. For each individual theme, the researcher conducts and writes up a detailed analysis as well as identifying the story that each theme tells and how it fits into the broader overall story that the researcher is trying to tell. The researcher in the current study went through all the themes to see if they relate with the current study and to check out if there are some potential themes that have been missed from the data. The process of refining was ongoing at this phase.

In phase six, the researcher produces the report. This stage begins when the researcher has a set of fully worked-out themes and involves the final analysis and write-up of the report. The researcher in this stage tells the complicated story of his or her data, in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of the analysis. The analysis

is supposed to provide a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tells. In this phase the researcher in the current study finalized the analysis and came up with a report on how each of the themes is interesting and its relationship with the current study.

In this study, the researcher first arranged all the data in order of dates in which the interviews were held. The field notes, consent forms and interview guides were clearly labeled. And the data was later transcribed in hard copy and then typed in the computer to be secure. The data was kept secure in the memory sticks and also in the electronic mail to avoid loss of data. The researcher had to go through the thematic analysis phases by first getting familiar with the responses. In order to generate data into major themes and sub themes. Emerging themes which were in line with the study were also taken into consideration by using theoretical framework and literature review. The researcher generated codes from the data which the researcher to organize data into groups. The data that was similar was organized in the same group and a pattern was made. Themes were identified and they all had to go through the process of refining until the researcher made sense of the data. The materials that were used in data collection which include; signed consent, audio data and hand written field notes were kept secure in order to be used for reference and follow ups.

3.8. Issues of Credibility and Trustworthiness

According to Cohen et al. (2007), reliability in qualitative research is regarded as a fit between what the researcher records as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched. Creswell (2009) also said that, qualitative reliability

means that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects, (Creswell, 2009). Trustworthiness on the other hand involves credibility (in reference to internal validity); transferability (in preference to external validity/ generalizability); dependability (in preference to reliability); and conformability (in preference to objectivity), (Shenton, 2004).

To reach reliability, Creswell (2009), said that, the researcher must check transcripts to make sure that they do not contain obvious mistakes made during the transcription. The researcher should also make sure that, there is not a drift in the definition of codes. Cohen et al. (2007) argues that, since qualitative research is holistic and strives to record the multiple interpretation of meanings, the notion of reliability is construed as dependability. According to Given (2008), dependability can be achieved if the researcher lays out the procedures and data generation tools in a way that other can also attempt to generate data in similar conditions. Others should be able to come up with same results that the researcher came up with as long as the conditions are similar. Shenton (2004), said that, for such to be achieved, the researcher needs to employ overlapping methods and also having an in-depth methodological description to allow study to be repeated.

During data collection, the data was generated through interviews. The interview guide was designed in such a way that, respondents were able to express their experiences and perceptions of the college culture. The researcher's supervisors were so helpful in detecting and reforming questions that made the respondents feel uncomfortable or confused.

The data that was collected for the study was derived using the Oberg's (1960) theory of adjustment to the new culture. Some questions were paraphrased or repeated in order to ensure that the data collected is true. The data collected was later backed by the available literature from other countries that have done college life experiences research.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are very vital in every research therefore, the study took into consideration research ethics. According to Bryman (2008), ethical standards require that researchers do not put participants in a situation where they might be at risk of harm as a result of their participation. This can be both physical and psychological.

3.9.1 Anonymity, Privacy and Confidentiality

The study respected the anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of the respondents. David and Sutton (2004), said that a respondent has the right to have his or her identity remain anonymous and this can be guaranteed when the researcher cannot identify a given response with a given respondent. In the current study anonymity was achieved by giving participants pseudo names. Participants were told beforehand that, their names will not be used. Koskei and Simiyu, 2015 said that, Confidentiality is threatened when Interviews reveal details between the pair that were previously secret. Confidentiality was achieved in the study by using pseudo names in order to get the participants' trust while protecting their right to privacy.

3.9.2 Informed Consent

David and Sutton (2004) state that, informed consent means knowing consent of individuals to participate as an exercise of their choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit, duress or similar unfair inducement or manipulation. In the current study, the researcher gained an informed consent from the authorities about the researcher's interest in conducting research at the College. The key informants which were part of the College authorities were met in person and were asked about the time that they felt better to be interviewed. The students who participated in the research were also asked if they were willing to participate in the research after explaining to each of them the purpose of the study. They too were also asked on the appropriate time that they felt ok to be interviewed. This created room for them not to feel like they are panicked or forced beyond their will. The researcher took the respondents' phone numbers to call them before the date and on the date of the interview to serve as a reminder to them about the agreed interview and also to know if they were still committed to the interview.

3.9.3 Access

According to Feldman et al. (2003), gaining access involves convincing people that the researcher has decided upon on whom should be the informants that would provide information in conducting research. In the current study, the researcher sought the letter of introduction from the faculty of Education requesting access to conduct the study at the College. Later the researcher also had to seek permission from each of the college authorities who were to be interviewed as key informants so that they give their opinions on the request and the time they feel free for the interviews to be conducted. Appointments were based on interviewees' availability. Furthermore, the researcher asked for permission to tape-record interviews and the researcher used a writing pad to

get information for those who did not want to be tape- recorded. The notes that were taken were expanded immediately after the interview to ensure that the researcher would not forget what was discussed. This permitted the notes to be closer to the recorded interviews.

3.9.4 Acceptance

The researcher sought the introductory letter from the college department in order to be easily accepted in the study area. The researcher presented to each participant in the study the informed consent and the fact anonymity. The participants were also informed about the aim of the study so that they would not expect to benefit in any way whether in cash or kind from participating in the study. The researcher followed the appropriate dress code for the institution in order to gain acceptance from both the authorities and first year students.

3.9.5 Betrayal

According to Leary (2001), betrayal occurs when in an established relationship where partners are involved with the relationship to an extent, that they trust one another. Therefore, betrayal is regarded as the intentional or unintentional breach of trust or the perception of such a breach, (Reina & Reina, 1999:3). In order not to damage the respondents' trust, the current study the researcher presented the consent forms to each respondent and each of them was well explained to before the actual interview of the benefit of the research. Pseudonyms were also used to hide the respondent's identity by doing so, nothing reported from the study permitted identification of respondents. All in all, all research procedures were followed in all the stages of the study.

3.9.6 Deception

According to Althanassoulis & Wilson (2008), deception in research consists of the following forms; Lies (to make up information or give information that is false or very different from the truth), Equivocations (to make an ambiguous or contradictory statement), concealment (to omit important or relevant information in order to mislead the participant or public), exaggerations (to overstate or extend the truth to a further degree for instance by telling the participant that participation in the experiment will benefit their health) and understatements (to minimize or scale down facts or the truth).

In the current study no information was contradictory, exaggerated, and concealed from the respondents. Each respondent was told before the actual interview of the purpose of the research and no false hopes were given to any of the respondents. Respondents were given assurance that any information that points directly to an individual respondent will be erased. And they were also assured that they will have access to the document once it was published. The study used audio taping with the participants' permission and for those who did not want to be audio taped, notes were taken in order to not miss any vital information that, they were expressing during the interview.

3.9.6 Beneficence

Beneficence refers to the obligation on the part of the investigator to maximize benefits for the individual participant and society while minimizing risk of harm to the individual (Adams, 2013). Through coding by using fake names on the respondents, the researcher made every effort to minimize the risks and maximize benefits for each participant in the study. The researcher also sought the relevant document from the school of education, in order to gain trust from the participants that no harm or abuse

will happen to them or their information. The researchers' contact details were offered to key informants and the first year students in case relevant issues rising from the study. For privacy sake, key informants were interviewed in their offices which also created flexibility on the side of the respondents. Both male and female respondents were asked by the researcher to be in open places where both the researcher and the respondent would feel psychological, and physically secure since each respondent was interviewed individually.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented an outline of research methodologies used in carrying out the study. The chapter has addressed relevant issues and steps that made the research more doable, of quality whilst leaving no harm to the participants. Each and every design and tool used, was backed up with relevant literature on its advantage and disadvantage and its implication to the research process. The role of the researcher was well described so as to gain trust from the respondents and fulfill the mission of getting the study done in a more professional manner.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Chapter overview

The chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study on an exploration of acculturation among First Year students in one of the colleges in Malawi. The structure of the chapter is based on the research questions and guided by the theoretical framework that informed the study. Broad themes emerged from the research questions and the emerging themes and issues from the analyzed data formed part of the sub-themes and the basis for interpretation and discussion. In the analysis of the results, Oberg's (1960) U-curve theory of adaptation into the new culture was used.

4.1 Biographic data of the respondents

The researcher interviewed eight social studies students and five key informants. Anonymous names were given to each of the respondents. The researcher grouped them as follows; rural female student (Tiyanyane), rural male student (Alfred), Urban female student (Sonia), Urban male student (David), Married female student (Chifuniro), married male student (Ayanja), Female student with special learning needs (Florence), Male student with special learning needs (Ebenezer), Dean of students (Mr. Moyo), Students special needs representative (Mphatso), Special needs specialist (Mr. Chinguwo), student representative President (Richard) and Assistant Registrar for social Welfare (Mrs. Chakwana).

4.2 The acculturation process among first year students at the sampled school

Findings from the interviews revealed that every First Year student from the sampled college comes with their own norms and values according to how they have been nurtured in their homes. This is was said in the following excerpts:

“Yea, when students come here, everybody comes with his norms and values according to how they have been nurtured in their homes and all that, it is true that with the passage of time, students get they assimilate they want to be fashionable and go with time and little by little, you find that close and closer because everybody wants to be identified by the larger society.” (Interview with Richard, 2nd April, 2018).

However with the passage of time first year students adapt to the culture of the college. The culture includes the way they act, dress, speak and associate with others. The participants in the study described the college culture in the following excerpts:

College culture is aa everybody would want to be seen as someone who is well to do, aa someone who dresses nicely by dressing nicely you know we have these kind of clothes that are bought in China shops yea so if you come here with such kind of clothes, you are considered as a backward person, so no one would want to be seen as backward kind of a person but rather to be ozitsata (somebody who is well acquainted to the recent fashion) yea.” (Interview with Richard, 2nd April, 2018)

“oh right, when we say the college student, most people they do consider that mwina akakhala mnyamata (maybe it it’s a guy), should be able to have a girl friend or girlfriends, a beer taker and others they want to aa he is supposed to be smoking, so sometimes people they aa involve themselves in such kind of a culture so they should be known as a real intelligentsia. Girls side aa you should have a boyfriend, komanso and also drinking beer. Yea aaa and others they consider themselves kuti they should participate like aa in social weekends aa open air functions yea!” (Interview with Mphatso, 2nd April, 2018).

In addition, findings also revealed that, First year students from the rural areas revealed to have felt offended and harassed with the dressing of most female students, however with the passage of time they reported to have coped with it. It was also revealed that, almost every First Year student longs to identify themselves with the larger community and no one wants to be seen not conforming to the college culture. The findings further revealed that, First Year students who were failing to acculturate to the dominant culture were seen to be backward and resistant to change. According to the study findings, the college culture affects them academically, socially and psychologically.

4.3 The common effects of students' acculturation amongst first year students

The findings from the interviews revealed that First Year students in the sampled college, experienced both positive and negative effects of acculturation.

4.3.1 Positive effects of the acculturation process

The finding from the interviews on the positive effects of the acculturation process revealed that students felt that college life makes them feel independent. Therefore, first year students were also asked to express how they felt living an independent life without family and friends. First Year students said the following: it wasn't a problem, not a big challenge, used to it, normal, feeling like an adult, challenge, mixed feelings, nice. These were explained in the following responses:

Staying an independent life has made me feel like an adult you know, even though I was at a boarding school, I wasn't budgeting food and other things on my own, the school would provide us food, accommodation and my parents would come frequently to see me, with groceries I mean, so living a college life, a lot has changed and I have learnt a lot about budgeting you know, (Interview with Sonia, 6th April, 2017).

“As for me, It wasn’t a problem, because from secondary school, I was living at a boarding school so here it’s just a continuation And I was looking for that, all my life, I wanted to test college life because my parents were all over me I was looking forward.” (Interview with David, 4th April, 2018).

“It was nice u know I started that life when I was 7 years old at Siyaludzu then I went to Stella Maris which is a boarding secondary school, so I feel like its normal.” (Interview with Florence, 10th April, 2018).

“Yea, the feeling was mixed, at the other hand I was excited about staying here, but I then realized that different things are going to change I mean, my family will suffer somehow, and you know I used to tell myself that I am already independent and it will be fine, but when I came here I found out that I was still dependent on my husband and I just need to be taking care of the little I have in order to not misuse it.” (Interview with Chifuniro, 5th April, 2018).

The study revealed that, First Year students valued living an independent life that was free from their parents. However, students had mixed reactions of living an independent life and this varied according to the students’ secondary school background and their marital status. Married students specifically had multiple roles hence felt like they faced more challenges. Another study done by Mindrup (2012) found that, students with multiple roles struggle to balance multiple life roles and priorities hence there is need for institutions to consider programs and services that support multiple identities. The negative findings on effects of living an independent life, relate to Oberg’s (1960), theory of adjustment which states that during cultural shock stage, newcomers are confronted with reality and start complaining.

The special needs specialist concurred with the other participant who talked about the challenges faced during the transition process in the following excerpts:

“Living an independent life is always a challenge it depends with the financial backgrounds that is, if she or he comes from a better financial backgrounds that one is able to actually do different activities but from a poor or low backgrounds of course not.” (Interview with Mr. Chinguwo, 19th April, 2018)

4.3.2 Negative effects of the acculturation

Students were asked about the negative effects of their acculturation experiences in relation to living an independent life. The following themes emerged: stress and anxiety, financial challenges, academic challenges, social challenges, time management, accommodation and social challenges.

4.3.2.1 Stress and Anxiety

The study revealed that First Year students experienced stress and anxiety before and after coming to the sampled college. Upon being asked about what students were anxious about before coming to college, the following themes emerged; new environment, getting weeded, school fees, and family issues. This was illustrated in the following excerpts:

“College life is full of new things, so I don’t like looking new kumalo (at a place) like zimakuchotsera (it robs) your self-esteem so yea, I didn’t want the feeling of being a new comer” (Interview with Sonia, 06th April, 2018).

“Ok, what made me anxious was pertaining to the things of school fees, in fact I had nobody else to sponsor me, I really looked upon myself like what am I going to do and again the issue of weeding aa I had no idea because I heard that even the first semester, you can be weeded.”(Interview with Ayanja, 5th April, 2018).

The findings of the study corroborate Shanley and Johnston's (2008) study who discovered that every First Year student is scared sick of going off to college and it doesn't matter whether students are heading to large public Universities or small elite private colleges. The findings of anxiety however, do not corroborate with the Oberg's (1960) honey moon phase, because, instead of being excited about college, the findings reveal that, First Year students have fear of how they will manage college life in regard to various issues mentioned above.

From the findings, it was revealed that, First Year students' feelings of stress and anxiety overrode the joy of coming to college. Their feelings included; stress, anxiety, confusion, fear, excitement, mixed feelings, full of expectations and curiosity. Even though some students revealed to have mixed feelings, the feelings of stress and anxiety overrode the joy. The mentioned feelings are explained in the following excerpts:

"Yea, In fact, the day I arrived in the campus I was a man who was full of stress because was like an in a new environment, how am I going to cope with the situations yea of cause with an element of excitement but the majority of the feeling was just stress and anxiety." (Interview with Alfred, 04th April, 2018).

"According to me, I was excited and at the same time I was confused, like it was for the first time, I didn't know the sports complex and everything you know was new so I was both excited and confused and for the first time missing classes and yea, it was a hassle, so nkhwawa eti (stress) filled me up, thinking like maybe at the end of the semester maybe am going to be weeded because ndinapanga miss ma lessons ena ndi ena (I missed some classes)." (Interview with David, 4th April, 2018).

This was also echoed by the Assistant Registrar for the social welfare of students who said:

“They have a lot of fear because they hear a lot from their friends so sometimes if they are not careful, they don’t know what to follow and they fall into bad company aa but there are those who will come to this office to seek guidance.”(Interview with Mrs. Chakwana, 16th April, 2018).

The findings from the study do not relate to Oberg’s (1960) theory of adjustment to the new culture which states that new comers are excited and many feel like they have adjusted. However the research findings are similar to Brown & Holloway (2008) who researched on the adjustment journey of international post graduate students at a University in the south of England and it was found that, during the initial stage of coming to college, students had no characteristics of excitement. Even though such feelings were present, but they were overwhelmed by negative symptoms associated with culture shock. The results concerning students’ feelings during the honeymoon phase challenge the Oberg’s 1960 U-Curve theory of adjustment to the new culture because, during the honeymoon stage, a new comer feels so exited in the new environment and feels like they have adjusted. However in the current study, first year students had feelings of stress and anxiety. Such feelings of stress, anxiety or fear affects first year students in different ways. According to Mc. Namara (2012), high stress levels of stress in college that occur as a result of acculturation, affects students’ performance.

Moreover, the findings also revealed that First Year students were stressed and disappointed when their expectations of college life could not match with the reality of college life. This was explained in the following excerpts:

“Let me say as for myself I was thinking that I will find everything in order, so that we have to use those things and perform as we were doing at the secondary.

I thought it's a higher learning institution so I am supposed to be offered everything, but it was a disappointment when I found that, the college has few resources, it stressed me so much.” (Interview with Ebenezer, 10th April, 2018).

The study found that, students had high hopes of a college life compared to the secondary school life that they were transitioning from. These findings can be compared to the findings of Kandiko & Mawer, (2013), who conducted a study to explore the views of students in higher education across the UK in 2012-13. The students' expectations were that of value-for-money expectations. Students expected to have sufficient contact hours, all teaching and learning resources available, good learning spaces and the institutions' investment in the students. A study done by Brinkworth et al. (2008) found that there is a widening gap between commencing students' expectations and what is actually to be delivered at University. Karen (2014) also described the first-year students' high expectations of college life as freshman myth.

This concept highlights how first year student overstate what they plan to do in college. Karen (2014) further stated that, due to high expectations that they have, first years end up feeling disconnected between reality and expectations. The findings corroborate with Oberg's (1960) phase one of honey moon stage whereby students have a lot of expectations of college education because they just fantasize it due to excitement and maybe because of lack of information of what college is like. Tinto (2008), said that, institutions of higher learning should not blame the students for their poor understanding of University expectations but instead should adopt a more student-centered and supportive approach that will encourage their social and academic integration from first year.

4.3.2.2 Financial challenges

The study found that, all the participants mentioned financial challenge as the most challenging issue as they were living an independent life at the College.

“Living an independent life has affected me financially, the land lords, they don’t have limits of rental bills so they just raise anyhow and they have evil manners of speaking, so it is so hard to live an independent life. My parents are not able to provide everything that I need as a college student for example a laptop and it’s a challenge, when we try to borrow laptops from our fellow students they say, we are needy students. We see other guys putting on classic things we admire but we look at our pockets and we see that we can’t manage.” (Interview with Tiyanjane, 6th April, 2018).

“To manage finances it’s still hard” (Interview with David, 4th April, 2018).

“Yea, sometimes it’s never enough, yea, because, you never know what may happen next because you may be given an assignment to print out that will require an extra money so the money I receive from parents during month end only covers a few things and then the more expenses here at school aa like it’s never enough coz every expense we have, has an extra cost.” (Interview with Sonia, 6th April, 2018).

“It’s a challenge (finances) because I have a kid she goes to a private school, I have to fetch fees for her and for me as well, and the money I get I also need to buy groceries at home and for school expenses so yea timangopilira (we just persevere) but it’s not easy, sometimes I stay hungry, I have no money, I can’t do anything.” (Interview with Chifuniro, 5th April, 2018).

“like for the past years when people were receiving money, aa some parents still have that feeling that, aa when you are at College, you receive money so aaa when you ask for money, they give you even ten thousand kwacha so yea

uhmm it's hard to manage the money. Like maybe you are living in a house costing you a lot so aaa like more than the money you have received yea."
(Interview with Alfred, 6th April, 2018).

From the above findings, students struggle to make ends meet when they are at College which poses as a huge challenge to their academic life, since they need to buy almost everything. The participants expressed how hard it is for them to manage the little that they have. CERT (2007), also found that, students at the College struggle with finances right from the start because they have to budget the little money to cover all sorts of things including, meals, accommodation outside campus. Fosnacht & Dong (2013) in their study on financial stress and its impact on First Year college experiences found that four of the five most common stressors among students related to their personal finances and First Year students more frequently experienced extreme or high stress related to the cost of living and living than other students. Fosnacht & Dong (2013), further discussed that students under financial stress are more likely to also suffer from depression, anxiety, or suicidal thought and may even suffer low academic performance. Karen (2014) also mentioned finances as one challenges that affects higher education. Karen 2014) mentioned rural First Year students in particular, that they are more affected by financial barrier than their fellow students from urban areas because of their low parent income and the rising cost of tuition.

According to the findings, financial stress has proved to be one of the factors that first year students pass through during their adaptation to the college culture hence it affects their acculturation process. Financial stress affect the levels of persistence in first year college students. According to Jewett (2008), higher levels of persistence was directly

related to issues of finances. The findings above relate to culture shock stage in Oberg's (1960) theory of culture adjustment. There is need for government, and other non-governmental organizations join hands to help lessen culture shock among first year students. Karen 2014; Jewett (2008), suggested that, there is need for financial aid in form of scholarships and grants, either from parents or from other institution in order to help students persist through out college life.

4.3.2.3 Accommodation challenge.

The issue of accommodation also proved to be one of the major challenges. Almost all participants who were interviewed were not given on campus accommodation due to the double cohort problem that affected almost their whole 2017-2018 cohort except students who had special needs. Students expressed frustration and lack of sense of belonging to the college being outside the campus. Participants were asked if they found accommodation on campus and this is what they said:

“ No, ndinapezeka kuti (it was found that), I have found a place off campus, of course it was an expensive accommodation but at least as am talking now I am at Chigalu (Community near campus). It's so confusing to live outside the campus, sometimes I don't feel like, I am part of Chigalu intelligencia (community of learners) you know?” (Interview with David, date, 2018).

I didn't find accommodation on campus, to say the truth, accommodation is a challenge here, and if at all someone is to withdraw its mainly on the issues of accommodation and food, of course for me I started staying at my relatives' home but it was far and school kunoko (here) needs kuti munthu uyandikire (someone to be closer to the campus) so, I had to find a room kwa (at) Chigalu. School tu kuno siyovuta kwenikweni koma zopats stress kwambiri ndi za (school

is not really hard but what stresses people a lot is the issue of) accommodation and food (Interview with Chifuniro, 5th April, 2018)

In agreement, the college students' Union President said;

You know accommodation on campus, accommodates few students through application, so it is a randomized system which you are not guaranteed whether you are going to get a place in campus so for the first years, they do not know whether they have a campus accommodation or not, few first years have been accommodated on campus so they are finding problems you know in finding off campus accommodation and out there the accommodation is not very much conducive because for you to get a decent accommodation you should be thinking of K15,000 or more. (Interview with Richard, 2nd April, 2018).

From the above findings, First Year students varied living on-campus better than living off campus mainly because it fosters a sense of belonging, it is cheaper and secure. These findings relate to CERT (2007), who found that residential accommodation is so limited at the sampled college and with the problems of finances, students opt for cheaper accommodation. CERT (2007), discovered that, many non-residential students were living in shanty houses that were less secure and students were facing a lot of problems such as harassment on their way to their rented shanty homes. CERT (2007), also discovered that there was less feeling of belongingness for most students who were living outside the campus because they had no place to rest during breaks. Students were found sitting around the library making noise which affected others who were studying. Worse still CERT (2007), found that, students had limited time to study on-campus because of fear during the night since it is not really secure walking around to or from campus during the day or night at sampled college.

Such experiences affect students' academic and social life. According to Nester (2014), the living environment has an impact on students' experience. The study findings are also similar to the study of Mutambara & Bhebe (2012), who discovered that, accommodation is one of the major stressors among first year students. They further said that, students who stay outside the campus face additional stressors that hinder them from accessing university services. Jewett (2008), said that, on- campus living environment is better than off campus because it increases retention rates for students. Nester (2014) recommended the on-campus residential environment because it contains programs and support systems that assist first year students in the social and academic transition to college. In relation to Oberg's (1960) theory of adjustment to the new culture, such experiences that students face during culture shock period, affects students' wellbeing at college hence there is need for the college to come up with measures that would help solve the accommodation problem.

4.3.2.4 Academic challenges

Academic challenges also posed to be a major threat in the participant's college experience. In order to get the information, students were asked on their academic self-esteem soon after coming to college, their ability to find teaching and learning resources, the difference in teaching methods between college and secondary school and their ability to locate classroom soon after starting learning.

4.3.2.4.1 Academic self-esteem

Upon being asked about their academic level of self-esteem, findings revealed that, most First Year students, had very low self-esteem because of the difference in teaching and learning methods and the fear of failure. This was shown in the following excerpts:

“It was very low yea, very low. We were under pressure, under pressure because they were giving us soft copies and at secondary we used to have hard copies yea something like that.” (Interview with David, 4th April, 2018).

“Ok, my self-esteem was not all that very high, you see the way we were not attending classes and sometimes the way the lectures were presenting the stuff, it was like an intimidation because they would just teach using the power point presentations so it was new. aa some of the terms like, tutorials I was like what are tutorials, tutors I was like who are tutors.” (Interview with Alfred, 4th April, 2018)

“aa learning was bit different because the lecturers were just explaining here and there and after that giving us ma assignments so aaa all I could see was like aa mwina andiweeder (that maybe I am going to get weeded).” (Interview with Sonia, 6th April, 2018).

“My self-esteem was very low, you know, times have changed it’s not like how we were learning by then so aa learning using projectors and jotting down notes and ma assignments using ma laptops and computers ee it was hard.” (Interview with Chifuniro, 5th April, 2018)

“Low, it was low, I thought I will be weeded, anthu amakhala akukuwophyezani kuti (people always threaten us that) we will be weeded so like we will have difficult exams.” (Interview with Florence, 10th April, 2018).

The key informants concurred with what the First Year students said as they explained that:

“When someone is battling with self-esteem, cannot do anything, cannot go to class, or when you are in class, you feel like not go to class or when you are in class, you feel like you are at the bottom aa while the rest are on top even you performance, you feel like you know, am not in a good position to aa to do that, you know people do not fail here because they are not intelligent but because

they have already down played themselves. And you know in our classes, you have downplayed themselves.” (Interview with Richard, 2nd April, 2018).

“Yea, aa we have ever experienced kuti (that) some students they do lack self-esteem, most of the times, it’s just because they are being intimidated by people aa those students who are ahead of them, they do treat them aa the information that they do feed them about certain lecturer, aa kuti ndi ovuta (some are strict) and sometimes due to lack of resources, aa maybe, they don’t have enough resources like they don’t have braille books or maybe aa the machine that they can use to print them, maybe some don’t have wheel chairs to go to the library, aa so they have never seen in the library. Why, chi cape chinawonongeka kale kale (the cape stopped worked some time back) so self-esteem most of the times it is being infringed.” (Interview with Mphatso, 3rd April, 2018).

The findings revealed that, First Year students’ self-esteem is mainly low soon after being confronted with a lot of pressure from lectures and having to deal with new methods of teaching at the college. Students also fear that, they may get weeded and mainly stress overrides self-esteem among the First Year students. The fear of failure, as revealed in the study, relates to a study done by Mudhovozi (2012), which found that, many first year students had low self-esteem due to fear of failure. According to Tahir (2010), First Year students experience certain levels of declination in self-esteem judgments due to high academic stress and anxiety.

The findings also show that, students coming from community day secondary schools came from low economic background and had lower self-esteem compared to fellow friends from boarding or good private secondary schools because the felt intimidated hence they are not able to ask for clarity from lectures. The study findings relate to

Mudhovozi (2012), who found that, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, had low self-esteem and could not ask the lecturers to clarify some academic issues because of lack of proficiency in speaking English being the official language of Communication during classes. Finch (2010) in his study also found that, students coming from poor backgrounds had low self- esteem and could not persist in college compared to other first year students.

Furthermore, the findings also show that, students who have special learning needs also lack learning resources for example, braille books and specialists which makes them have low self-esteem. Ainscow (1999) in his study, recommended that, the process of developing inclusive schools requires the whole system to make several improvements such as examining and addressing barriers to student participation. UNICEF (2010) also found that, learning material and resources are a major barrier to the education of students with disabilities. In relation to Oberg's theory of adjustment to the new environment, for students to undergo through cultural shock and adjust easily to the college environment, there is need for the college especially the lecturers to employ methods that, will boost students' self-esteem.

4.3.2.4 .2 Teaching and learning resources

The findings revealed that, First Year students, had challenges in accessing teaching and learning resources especially in the library.

“As for me the experience was very poor, because you know, even going to the library, I remember I just went there to explore just to see how it looks like but I didn't know where I can get it. They say they use the pockets and I didn't know what the pockets are. I just started asking fellow friends, ma first years, kuti

kodi zimayenda bwanji basi ndinazolowerano (I didn't know how things work but I am now used to it). (Interview with Alfred, 6th April, 2018)

“Fear, aaa that's my performance yea, that's what am afraid of. Yea, it was so difficult like I had to push some lectures to give me some soft copies and I had to ask special needs specialists to change them to braille yea. I was just accepting that it has happened and I have just to accept yea.” (Interview with Ebenezer, 10th April, 2018).

In addition the key informants had this to say:

““To manage time tables, that's a hassle as well, you know, you have an exam at 6:00 am and you have a class 5: 00 am and you have an assignment due tomorrow so it's a hassle yea, you use a cost benefit analysis meaning which one is most beneficial you know but by the end of the day you have half-baked assignments because of having less time to get ready, the performance is just on average for most students and life goes one.” (Interview with Richard, 2nd April, 2018).

“Yea, more especially with the learning materials when we are producing resources for them and they are many, it's a problem, we knock off odd hours just to complete the materials for them to read in terms of class timetables, they have colleagues to are sighted so they follow the class time tables properly, when we allocate them into rooms, we tell them that they should have a partner who is visual, so that they should be leading each other to classes especially of the same class. But at the beginning of the semester, it becomes hard but later on, they cope fellow students help them especially leading scripts for them.” (Interview with Mr. Chinguwo, 19th April, 2018).

“We have many of them aa they fail to manage their time properly aaa a and even the resources you see are very few and even for those who have resources aa they are not enough and managing those resources is a problem so we also

try to assist them as much as we can but there still a limit far we can do.”
(Interview with Mrs. Chakwana, 16th April, 2018).

The above findings revealed that, First Year students had problems in accessing teaching and learning resources soon after starting college life especially in the library regardless of being oriented. The study agrees with Brinkworth et al (2008), that First Year students experience high stress levels especially when they are finding problems in adapting to college ways of doing things. However, Hassel & Ridout (2018) advised that, there is need for universities to offer thorough orientations for incoming students and this should be a long process rather than just a week or days’ process. The findings relate to Oberg’s (1960), theory during culture shock stage because in this stage new comers experiences different shocking experiences of which most of them are challenging.

4.3.2.4.3 A comparison in teaching methods between college and secondary school.

The findings revealed that, the teaching methods of college and secondary school were different. One of the differences was that, at secondary school, teachers spoon-fed the students and yet in college, lecturers use lecturing method whereby students are supposed to find information on their own. Students also spotted out the use of technological learning resources as challenging to them since at secondary school, they used blackboards. This was explained in the following remarks;

“Ok here we are using computers and audio tapes, whilst in secondary school we were given notes so yea there is a great difference and also the school here is tougher than secondary school.” (Interview with Florence, 10th April, 2018)

“It was so different because most of the things we were supposed to find them ourselves while at secondary school, the teachers were sourcing resources for us. In those first days the lecturers were understanding us so yea we were given a hard copy to photocopy, but now it is normal.” (Interview with Ayanja, 5th April, 2018).

“Yea in secondary school, teachers were making notes for us, were giving us the stuff whilst here, you have to source out for yourself. So here it’s hard due to lack of material but we are using the little material we have as long as it works.” (Interview with Ebenezer, 10th April, 2018)

“In secondary school they write on the board while here they use projectors so yea it is different, but with time all of us get used.” (Interview with Sonia, 6th April, 2018).

4.3.2.4.4 Ability to manage class timetables, locate classes and other places on campus soon after starting course work

From the findings, First Year students find it challenging to locate classes easily soon after starting college life. For instance, students failed to know which class is which because, classroom orientations were not part of the orientation program.

“It was hard to find room for us to learn like room A, room what, even complex and other students from other years would trick us, Asking them where is complex they would say it’s behind the great hall and yet it was a lie.” (Interview with David, 6th April, 2018)

“The map at the library didn’t help out at all, it was confusing.” (Interview with Sonia, 6th April, 2018)

The assistant registrar also echoed the following;

“Class timetables are always a challenge for first year students in their first days aaa because they don’t know which room they are supposed to learn hence they aa miss classes so yea after some time yea they aa cope with it and aaa it’s all about time.” (Interview with Mrs. Chakwana, 16th April, 2018).

The findings above on academic challenges show that, First Year students, meet problems in getting acquainted with lecturing method, accessing teaching and learning materials and even managing class timetables due to the inability to locate classes. Findings on teaching methods conquer with Mudhovozi (2012), who discovered that, First Year students had difficulty adjusting to the different styles of teaching in college. Sanders et al. (2000), said that, even though most universities tend to use formal lectures with a large number of students as opposed to the usual small classes in high school, new students enjoy learning through group interaction rather than formal lectures. Therefore, In order for new students to adapt well to the college environment, lecturers should use methods that, require students to interact with fellow students.

The findings revealed that, First Year students found college education different from high school in terms of teaching resources and class time timetables. The findings revealed relate to the study done by Appleby (2017), who asked his students to differentiate between high school classes and college classes. The First Year students said that both the amount and difficulty of the work they were required to do in college classes had increased significantly from high school. Students also complained that, in College, you have to read everything do research a lot than in high school. Furthermore, Appleby (2017) discovered that, First Year students had difficulties in managing class timetables as compared to the tie they were in high school. According to Mutambara &

Bhebe (2012), First Year students have little idea about scheduling of classes because in high school, everything is scheduled for them, study time is given to them and all they do is follow it. This causes first year students to have challenges in balancing up time.

Furthermore, the study found that students with or without special learning needs had challenges in using technological teaching and learning aids for example, audio tape, computers and projectors. The United States Department of Education (2017) said that there is need to close the digital use divide by making learning experiences enabled by technology to be accessible for all learners including with special needs.

The study relates to Oberg's(1960), culture shock stage in the adjustment theory because, differences in learning methods, managing time tables and accessing learning resources can pose as a shock to first year students who are just coming from high school. The overall findings on academic challenges therefore, relate with Mudhovozi (2012), who said that, the experience of attending university is complex and pregnant with challenges that impinge on the academic success of university students.

4.3.2.5 Social challenges

The study found that, students also met social challenges as they were trying to adapt to the college environment. The researcher thought it would sound too personal and may not be effective for students to discuss how sexual relationships and drug and substance abuse have affected each student as an individual. Therefore, participants were just asked to give their opinions on these issues.

4.3.2.5.1 Opinions about independence and sexual relationships

Students and key informants were asked to give their opinions how they perceive fellow students who express independence through sexual relationships. It seems there are

mixed reactions on how people feel on the issue of sexual relationships. The participants answered the following; personal issue, private issue, private life, normal, not good, assumptions. The mentioned opinions are explained in the following excerpts:

“(laughs) Yea, it’s normal, since you are in college it’s time to be in a relationship intimacy relations its normal, it just depends on the principals that you have.” (Interview with Ebenezer, 10th April, 2018).

“We were already told during orientation that, here we have no bell and everyone is an adult so we can’t be guiding each other whether to be in a relationship or not.” (Interview with Chifuniro, 5th April, 2018).

“Ok, as I already explained kumayambiliro kuja (at first) like aa some of the students having that feeling that now am an adult and am able to live on my own, I can do everything, there is no such a person that will ruin my style aa zimawapanga prompt (It prompts them) aa kuti azipanga (that they should) enter into relationships aa we have ever experienced kuti okhaokha akumapatsana mimba (Special needs students impregnate each other).” (Interview with Mphatso, 3rd April, 2018).

In agreement, the special needs specialist said:

“Actually, they (special needs) also want to be touched in the sense that they also want to be in sexual relationships with those of opposite sex so the challenge is, who is going to propose them and how but unfortunately the proposition is done within the house, I mean they propose one another so that’s all I can say it is like they have low self-esteem sure.”(Interview with Mr. Chinguwo, 19th April, 2018).

Participants were also asked if at all First Year students involved in sexual relationships affected in one way all the other. The participants' responses were as follows;

I can say in general that, sexual relationships affect an individual emotionally like most first year girls are proposed by ma finale or conti koma (but) they are just used amakhumudwa (they get upset). I can say many who are involved do learn from their mistakes even though ena (some) it's just a habit. (Interview with Ayanja, 5th April, 2018)

"Sexual relationships affects people here, like before I came here, people advised me already that most students have STIs because there is chisembwere (fornication) and its true when I came here yea people are doing bad things and are being infected by STI's if you can enquire from the clinic most customers of STI drugs are students and also it affects their academic life because a girl can be pregnant." (Interview with Alfred, 4th April, 2018).

In agreement, the key informants said the following;

"Cases of sexual relationship pose different challenges to the individuals doing them like contracting diseases, but students are always oriented on how to safely have sexual intercourse like using condoms and other contraceptives. Some make use of the advices but some don't so it deals with how the person looks at it." (Interview with Richard, 2nd April, 2018)

The findings above show that, First Year students with or without special learning needs fall into sexual relationships with fellow First Years or with students from other classes. And it is viewed by students as normal since every student is taken as an adult.

The findings show that, irresponsible sexual relationships affect students emotionally, physically and academically. Sexual relationships have more health risks than compared to other risks. A study done by Wittrup (2014) found that failure to disclose having unprotected sex with previous partners is common in a collage setting. He

further said that adolescents who engage in risky sexual behavior with multiple partners are less likely to use condoms, putting many at risk of STIs. And engagement in such risky behaviors leads to sexual transmitted infections, pregnancy and host of other problems. Studies have also shown that, sexual relationships affects female students more compared to males. Fiedler and Carey (2010), in their study of hook ups at collage, found that females who were involved in casual sex reported a decrease in self-esteem compared to men. Cooper et al. (1998) found that women are more likely to use sex to minimize threats to self-esteem.

The findings show that some students especially those with special needs fall into sexual relationships because of low self-esteem. Similar findings were reported by Wittrup (2014) who said that low self-esteem could increase the chances of participating in risky sexual behavior. The findings above relate to Oberg's (1960) culture shock stage, therefore there is need for the College to keep on civic educating students during the orientation about sexual relationships especially on what is normal and not normal and its impacts. Mudhovozi (2012), advised that, first year students needed to learn to negotiate dating in an era of sexually transmitted infections such as HIV.

4.2.3.5.2 Opinions on drug and substance abuse

Students were asked on their opinions on drug and substance abuse. The following responses emerged; beer is a reliever, big problem, its cultural, it's a choice, and a personal issue. The mentioned opinions are explained in the following excerpts:

“Some do that because of frustrations, maybe after heavy assignments, heavy exams, therefore they have to rest so there is nothing else we can do about this.”(Interview with Ebenezer, 10th April, 2018)

“aa I can say that drinking too is a personal issue, just that people forget that drinking too much may harm you.” (Interview with Ayanja, 5th April, 2018).

“aa I think drinking is not a big problem to me as long as you work hard in class and all that, so yea.” (Interview with Sonia, 6th April, 2018).

“To me, drinking is not good because people during the social weekends people drink to the excess you know, it’s like they don’t have tomorrow hahaha! It’s not good.”(Interview with Tiyanjane, 6th April, 2018).

“It does because, most of those who are involved in drugs and what have you, we have, I think like this year we have had a lot of disciplinary cases like when they get high, they start beating up their friends we have had incidences where even students actual stealing because they are under drugs and we have also heard instances of students doing things that they cannot do if they were under the normal circumstance.”(Interview with Mrs. Chakwana, 16th April, 2018).

From the findings, students have mixed reactions of drug and substance abuse, various participants viewed it as normal, cultural and a relief when a student is stressed or frustrated. This concurs with Ross & Dejong (2008), who found that, the college years are the time many youths first experiment with alcohol while others move from experimentation to frequent use. They further said that, college attendance itself creates additional risk because for many students, going to college brings substantial increase in responsibility and stress since students face major decisions that will direct the course of their academic, professional and personal lives for years to come. Chidzonga, (2014),

in his study found that, academic issues (66%), examinations (66%), and marks and grades (66%) were the highest sources of frustration at the University.

Furthermore, findings reveal that, drug and substance abuse has an effect on individual students and fellow students as it slows an individual's judgment of things leading to violence, and all other forms of misconduct. The findings corroborate with a study done by Ross & Dejong (2008), that drug and substance abuse, pose a lot of negative effects which include, poor grades, personal injury, physical illness, high-risk sexual behavior and death. They further discovered that, many students confront problems because their classmates misuse alcohol. Such problems range from, interrupted study and sleep, having to take care of a drunken student, being insulted or humiliated, having a serious argument, personal property damage, being a victim of sexual assault or date rape to receiving unwanted sexual advances. The findings relate to culture shock phase in Oberg's (1960) adjustment to the new culture, and the effects of drug and substance may affect students' adjustment to the college environment.

4.3.23.5 Social Transitions

Both key informants and First Year students were asked about social transitions at the College and mainly on how First Year students deal with issues to do with dressing styles, and language they used to speak before coming to College. The study found first year students experienced change mostly in dressing than in language.

4.3.2.6.1 Dressing transition

Students were asked to indicate the kind of dressing they were comfortable in and if at all their dressing has changed. The study found that, students' dressing styles had changed in one way all the other.

“My dressing aa has changed you know, ndaphunzira zambiri (I have learnt a lot) just that, with peer pressure sometimes ee utha kumavutika ndi vuto la ndalama (you can have problems with finding money) you know!” (Interview with Tiyanjane, 6th April, 2018).

According to the findings, First Year students’ dressing styles change as they assimilate to the college culture, however the only problem is that, first year students were pressurized emotionally to fit in the group of friends by buying good clothes that, would suit the environment. And no first year student wanted to feel as not being acquainted with the college culture. However, finding good clothes comes at a big price. The findings relate to Mudhovozi (2012), who discovered that, one of the respondents felt that, his clothes were of inferior quality to those of other friends hence, felt like assimilating with those who had expensive clothes. According to Nester (2014), First Year students face a number of changes as they develop into independent adults in collage. This shows that, First Year students work on conforming to the dressing standards of the dominant culture of which mainly from those students who are coming from the upper or middle class. Upon being asked if other students’ dressing styles affect them, the following were the responses:

“Well I will aa talk about it aa in different angles if you are amongst brothers aa by being brothers it means faith men ok, there is this language that they speak that aa they are used to say kuti “akutiphinja (that they are harassing us)” ok, this girl has not dressed well, tikuphinjika (we are impinged/ harassed). Those are usually the first years who have just been at college for the first time you know. Now talking from the other side, people will be like ee look at that one, ee mwakuti mwakuti (this and that), she has not dressed well this is the sole reason for rape and all that. But with passage of time everybody gets used to it you know, the first time you are not used to see people showing their belly buttons and when such a girl comes your way, you look the other direction but with the passage of time you are like is normal.” (Richard, 2nd April, 2018).

“Not really, but sometimes you know you have a feeling kuti (that) maybe ineyo ndine osaukira (maybe I am poor) maybe because you know when you are in secondary school you dress Uniform always so coming here to see a lot of trousers a lot of skirts, very good dresses, so you feel like umangokhala ndi (you have) pressure yoti (that) I should have one of those kuti (that) maybe I can suit them.” (Interview with Florence, 10th April, 2018).

“Yea, actually according to zauzimuzi (my spiritual grounds), I found that girls dressing styles were affecting my spiritual anointing, Ndimapanga (I) drain coz I was not used to looking at girls showing legs, belly buttons hahaha I live in a place where girls wear long skirts or zitenje so here I was raped psychologically by just looking at how some people have dressed, the minds turns around to think about this and that. So it was like something that I thought very evil. For me it has been easy to cope up with it because I am a Christian, I have got a strong self-control.” (Interview with Alfred, 4th April, 2018).

“Yea, every week am sexually tempted yea, ineyo nde nsaname (I shouldn’t beat about the bush), kk mayesero amachuluka (am tempted much often) yea” (Interview with David, 6th April, 2018).

The findings also show that, male students are more affected by the female students’ dressing styles negatively as they feel more sexually aroused, harassed and done against their faith. The findings concur with the findings in the literature review of Pheko et al. (2014) in Botswana whereby, participants indicated difficulty in coming to terms with the way city dwellers particularly women dress more especially clothes that were revealing private body parts.

Furthermore, findings reveal that students who are coming from poor or lower class are mostly affected by how other students are dressing because their cultural capital loses value to that of their friends from upper class. In a similar study, Redd (2016) found that, cultural norms formed by higher social classes can disadvantage college students from working and lower class families because educational institutions value dominant cultural capital or high-status cultural markers of class. The findings relate to Oberg's (1960), culture shock stage, newcomers may feel overwhelmed by so many things that are different from their old environment, however the new comers who have dominant cultural capital find it easy to adjust.

4.3.2.6.2 Language transition

Students were asked about the language they were comfortably speaking before coming to college and how it has changed. The study found that first year students spoke the language that they were speaking before coming to the college, however, the findings revealed that, some students, felt that fellow students had much better English than them and that, the college vocabulary was hard to adapt to. For example, some of the participants had this to say:

“(laughs) Chichewa, I was fluent with Chichewa and Tumbuka and English timayiyankhula ku (we speak it at) school just that some of our friends have better English than we do” (Interview with Tiyanjane, 6th April, 2018).

“hii! ife nchichewa chomwechi (we speak Chichewa), komano (but) with here, some things have changed, kuli ena amalankhula (there are others speaking) American English komabe sizinasinthe kweni kweni (but it has not really changed). Komano zizungu zina za pa College pano like tutorials, we were wondering kuti (that) what are tutorials? (But some English words said at the

college were difficult for us to understand like “tutorials”)” (Interview with Alfred, 4th April, 2018).

The study revealed that, First Year students were comfortable in speaking their local language and English came second, however, some first years, wanted to speak like fellow friends who spoke American English especially those from high school. The findings are similar to the literature review finding of Mpheko et al. (2014) in their study on rural to urban migration among university students, whereby rural students indicated a feeling of low self-esteem in the use of English language even though it is an official language because of other students who were more fluent and proficient in their use of English.

The study also revealed that, First Year students took time to understand college vocabulary for example the meaning of “tutorials”. These findings concur with the findings from the literature review of Omachinski (2014) who said in his study that, First Year College students need to speak the language of higher education because professionals working on college campuses use vocabulary unfamiliar to new incoming students causing confusion and misunderstanding. For students to undergo through culture shock period, without crushing on their self-esteem, there is need for college administrators to plan during the orientation period to include college vocabulary so that First Year students would get familiar with it.

4.4 How students cope with the effects of their acculturation

The study revealed that, First Year students at the sampled college coped with the effects of their acculturation process through accessing college services that facilitate transition, social integration and social networking sites.

4.4.1 Accessing College services that facilitate in the transition process

The participants were asked on what the college does to assist in the transition process of the students. The participants explained that, the college organizes orientation program, and they are also offered the Office of Student Affairs and the Assistant Registrar for Social Welfare to assist them when they encompass various challenges. This is what the Assistant Registrar for Social Welfare had to say about the activities:

“What we do is to make them comfortable firstly, by doing our orientation program and during the orientation, we make sure that different types of stake holders come to talk with them, for example, there are people like from finances, they teach them how to manage their money, yea we have the security that talk to them on how they should keep their property safely, we have people talking to them about things that they should expect in college like peer pressure, diseases, family planning and where they can find help whenever they find themselves in problems, but still they have a lot of Fear because they hear a lot from their friends so sometimes if they are not careful, they don’t know what to follow and they fall into bad company but there are those who will come to this office to seek guidance on whatever they are passing through so I think these are the ones who are mostly safe but otherwise, others are prone to peer pressure.” (Interview with Mrs. Chakwana, 16th April, 2018).

The findings revealed that the college does a number of activities in helping students transition to the college culture smoothly, through orientation program and delegating some of college authorities to be handling issues concerning students for example,

guidance and counselling. During the orientation, students are also taught about what they are to expect in college in order not to fall into bad company. According to Chidzonga (2014), there is need for higher education institutions to come up with university support systems that will help first year students' transition much easily into college life. One of the ways he suggested was for college institutions to employ student-coaches who will help in giving information, orientation, tours, students' handouts, career information and even counselling. Chidzonga (2014), further suggested that, students should be encouraged to participate in seminars and workshops during their first year as a way of sustaining socialization.

4.4.1.1 Relevant issues during the orientation program

The study found that, course orientations, library orientations, and orientations about hard work were the key issue that they found relevant during the orientation program. These were mentioned in the following excerpts:

“Ok, the way some lecturers were presenting their faculties eti (yea), it was really nice and sometimes you can have a wish kuti (that), I think I will join this faculty, but then you go there kuti (that) you should join, there was a limitation kuti (that), no you cannot join, you know this, it cannot happen like yea we don't have books, yea like law faculty. I wanted to join law but after staying here for some months I discovered that, there is no single law braille book, yea. So I feel like it's nothing, ma orientations” (Interview with Florence, 10th April, 2018).

“Although orientation was very short but some of the good things were oriented on that particular in those days we were told on how we can use library, ICT, and how we can make a good choice on courses that are offered here.” (Interview with Ayanja, 5th April, 2018)”

The findings are in line with what Nester (2016) explained. She explained that, orientation programs are an essential step in the effort to retain first year students. She further noted that, first year students who have successfully transitioned to college generally have established a sense of belonging and have integrated both socially and academically into the new campus. However, the study also found that to some students like those with special needs found the orientation not useful and this is what one male student with SN stated:

“As for me nothing, in the orientation there was nothing about special needs and all that, maybe they were supposed to orient us in a special way as special needs students but they were just generalizing everything, so I just took it as normal not inclusive yea!” (Interview with Ebenezer, 10th April, 2018).

The findings show that the orientation had relevant issues that helped the students during their stay at the college. However, the issue of inclusiveness seemed to not have been taken into consideration as needed. In their study, Boening and Miller, (2005) said that, those who work in new student orientation programs should see ways that they can promote more inclusive and diverse environment. They further said that, Inclusiveness should be a holistic part of the college experience, which mean that they have to be taken into consideration during the orientation programs because orientations is the first formalized exposure to the college life.

4.4.1.1 Things that could have been included during the orientations.

From the findings, first year students who had been oriented, valued the orientation program and had a lot of expectations of which some were not met. The participant responses revealed that most students wished that they could be oriented on the

following; classroom location, morality, inclusiveness and academic excellence. The mentioned wishes were explained in the following excerpts:

“You know, we were supposed to be shown the classrooms and all that but we were not told, and the orientation I guess was just too short.” (Interview with Sonia, 6th April 2018)

“Most issues were tackled but I think they could have said more about how students can conduct themselves during social weekends, you know most students amatayilira nkumachita zosalongosoka (they forget themselves and do what is immoral) during social weekends and yet amayiwala kuti (yet they forget that) there is still life after College. People need to take care.” (Interview with Chifuniro, 5th April, 2018).

“I wish the program was more of accommodating some of us not just talking things in general and also to tell our friends on how to associate with us yea” (Interview with Florence, 10th April, 2018).

The study findings revealed that almost all the issues that students wished that they could have been oriented on, were already included in the orientation talks by the College. For example, in the remarks of the Assistant Registrar for Social Welfare about accessing college services that facilitate in the transition process, these issues were also mentioned. However the study findings reveal that First Year student were not satisfied with the orientations the college offered because they expected to be oriented on more. And findings reveal that it was not inclusive in nature. Chidzonga (2014), suggested that, there is need for an intensive activity based induction program purposely designed to introduce the students to the university. One of the emerging issues was that, the deans have not been there like parents to the students in the college. This was mentioned in the following interview:

The office of the student affairs is hardly accessible when you are passing through serious problems you know, personal judgment overrides everything.”
(Interview with Richard, 2nd April, 2018).

The officer of the Student Affairs in one of the remarks said;

“We don’t have babysitters here, we don’t treat anybody as a minor, and this is an adult life” (Interview with Mr. Moyo, 16th April, 2018).

The remarks of the officer in office of the student affairs had shown that, he somehow treated everyone as an adult disregarding the fact that, some First Year students start college life in the early teen years and are not yet adult, hence they need a fatherly or motherly figure. According to the University of Malawi, the office of the student affairs exists for the welfare of every student at the College. The office is driven by the philosophy that the college needs a senior person who serves to assist students in overcoming barriers that they might encounter in their everyday academic and social lives on campus. In addition, the office also helps in successfully dealing with inevitable challenges of University life in order to make it possible for them to optimize the students’ experience at the college, (University of Malawi, 2002). Regardless of the fact that, most students when they enter college, are thought to be mature, it is the duty of the office of the student affairs to assist and direct them where there is need since the office is a bridge between the lecturers and the students.

Westlake (2008), suggested that, there is need for colleges to be assigning the most student focused members of staff to guide the First Year students. According to Nester (2014), a campus environment that is supportive and affirming promotes students

success. So there is need for fatherly or motherly figure to build the relationship between the staff and student. Chidzonga (2014) also emphasized that, student learning is benefitted by college environments that emphasize close relationships between faculty and students as well as about faculty concerns about student development. There is value in allowing college students to face challenges but College students also need to be able to see that their school's environment offers them support needed in order to reduce the stress associated with transitioning into a challenging environment, (Wayt, 2012). This therefore, suggests that, in order for First Year students to persist in college, there is need for college authorities to put in structures that would help students to transition smoothly so that, at least, students should experience some kind of honeymoon.

4.4.2 Social integration among First Year students

The study findings revealed that, First Year students coped with the effects of their acculturation process through social networking. Therefore participants were interviewed on the criteria of choosing friends in the first weeks of college life, and relevance of friends to their adaptation process.

4.4.2.1 Criteria of choosing first friends during the first weeks.

The First Year participants were asked to mention their first friends soon after starting college life and whether they are still chatting with the same friends. The study revealed that, students made friends with fellow students who had common characteristics with them, such as courses, hobbies, habits, and home district or community. Some students admitted that they charted with those who were interested in charting with them.

“Yea, haaha! About friends, you know to me I can say that I am a drunkard so it was easy for me to find a friend, I can say that, hahaha! (Laughs) I cannot

run away from this, and aaa am a drunker yea so it wasn't a problem, I met a lot of friends. I chose them because they were having same interest like me so yea, we drunkards love each other you know. Up to now they are my friends, still boozing around and yea, I have made many new friends also.” (Interview with David, 4th April, 2018).

“I made a friend, the very first week of orientation, so we are still friends up to now, most of my friends I made were from education sociology I knew them from the orientations.” (Interview with Ayanja, 5th April, 2018).

“I had made different friends but most of them were from my home and some from the secondary school I was learning from, aa I am still socializing with them and I have made so many new friends.” (Interview with Sonia, 6th April, 2018).

“Ok, some are anyway, from different places not because they were homies (from the same home) but those who were showing interest on us were the ones were associated with.” Interview with Florence, 10th April, 2018).

The findings further revealed that, students made friends whom they had something in common or those who were showing interest in them during the first months of college. For example, First Year students who were coming from the same home as them or having same characters like drinking. This shows that students need peers who would accept them as they are. Swenson et al. (2008), noted that there is a significant relationships between the quality of peer relationships and adjustment variables during the transition to higher education. Mudhovozi (2002), explained of the importance of making new friends and not being pre-occupied with old friends from home because First Year students who are preoccupied with friends from home struggle to adjust. The

findings revealed that First Year students valued friendship from the start but in process some relationships were terminated whilst other maintained. This is shown in the following excerpts:

“Some I changed them, some they are those people we are including them, others basi (I left others)..... Maybe you feel kuti basi (that) they were not good enough to stay with because you know we believe in different things in this world, so if you feel kuti (that) this person maybe she or he want kuti (that) you should believe what he or she believes, you feel like uhmm I better leave this one and I should chart with this one and even some people in terms of performance they know kuti (that) they perform and when you come to them kuti (that) help me with this they refuse, then you know we cannot be friends.”
(Interview with female special needs student, 10th April, 2018).

The findings related to a study by Nester (2014), discovered that, First Year students often enter college without an established peer group, social network, or interpersonal support system on campus. According to Wayt (2012), friendship is vital among First Year students and the more students venture into different health relationships in college, the higher the percentage of persistence. Swenson et al (2008), explained that, when adolescents transition into college many changes happen, and since adolescence is a period of instability, peer relations should be central and encouraged so that, First Years should adjust easily. Swenson et al. (2014) further said that, poor attachment with peers results in poor academic performance. Swenson et al. (2014) further recommended that, First Year students should make friends in the new school environment because. If First Year students are more connected to outsiders than making new college friends, then they are not likely to be successfully, socialized to the new institution. Therefore, Successful social integration leads to communication skills, increase efficacy, stress coping and a sense of belonging (Nester, 2014). The

findings relate to Oberg's (1960) theory of adjustment to the new culture's phase of adjustment whereby new comers undergo through an active process of managing stress at different systemic levels both individuals and situational.

4.4.2.2 Relevance of friends to their adaptation to college life

First Year students were also asked on the role that friends played in their adaptation to the college life. The participants explained that, friends are encouragers, a shoulder to lean on in times of financial, emotional and academic challenges, and they also assist in combating loneliness.

"Oh I love them, they are my friends we assist each other like during assignments or when I have no money I borrow from them, they assist me, and when they have no money I assist them too. We encourage each other to be strong you know and because of them I was feeling like I am a real student of the school hahaha!" (Interview with David, 4th April, 2018).

"These friends were the best you know, a new life is hard to adapt but having them made me feel more at home than being lonely, it was a give a take kind of friekndship yea." (Interview with Ayanja, 5th April, 2018).

"aa friends were of help a lot you know having someone who is also in the same shoes as yours was a relief and sitimawalirana (we don't make each other feel low), we just encouraged one another" (Interview with Tiyanjane, 6th April, 2018).

From the above findings, students' choices of friends is essential for the First Year students' life at the college. From the responses, First Year students, value friendship as it is one of the essential elements that helps them integrate into the College life.

Nester (2014), said that the early stages of the first semester are a critical period. First year students who perceive that they have made friends, adjusted well and are satisfied socially during the first three weeks of school are more likely to persist to degree completion.

The study also revealed that, First Year students find friends with whom they feel that, they are in the same shoes with. In his study Finch (2011) found that, college students, valued friends as one of the main reasons why they were able to finish college education. In relation to Oberg's (1960), theory of adjustment, there is need for college students to engage more with peers during the honeymoon stage and throughout the stages of adjustment because friendship helps First Year students do undergo through the stage of adjustment so easily. Jewett (2008), found that adjustment to college among First Year students related to the support students felt from their peers and the degree to which they did not believe they needed familial support. Therefore first year students need to be encouraged to find and maintain relationships. Chidzonga (2014), suggests that, there is need for effective teaching methodologies that will allow students to interact more with peers in order for them to perform well in their academic life.

4.4.2.3 Social networking sites

Participants were asked on whether they were able to use technological devices and how social networking sites affected their adaptation to College environment. Findings revealed that, during their first weeks, some students were not all knowledgeable of the media networks, others knew face book and WhatsApp, and one urban student was on Twitter. The findings also reveal that, students found were affected by the social

networking sites to the point that, those who did not have advanced phones were forced to find one in order to be in line with their friends.

“Oh yes, social networking sites especially whatsApp proved to be of importance because, some assignments were posted on the whatsApp group and we could interact.” (Interview with Alfred, 5th April, 2018).

“I can say, social networking sites have been of help because, it bridged the gap between many of us since tonse pa whatsApp timangotengana (since all of us on the whatsApp group take each other) as first years and not kuti, uyu akuchokera kosauka or kolemera. And palibe wankulu or wang’ono (this one comes from a poor background or rich, and there is no one who is older or younger). (Interview with Ayanja, 5th April, 2018).

“Sure, social networking sites has helped me blend very well with my friends because imakuyikani (it puts you) at least pa same level, coz most of the things timazimvera pa ma (we could get them on the) group and you know campus ndi yayikulu (is big) but with whatsApp, you are able to call your friends for group discussions and whatever coz imatchipa kuposa kuyimba (it’s cheaper than calling) phone and you chart with a lot of friends on less costs. So it has improved my blending with people here I can say.” (Interview with Tiyanjane, 6th April, 2018).

From the above findings, social networks proved to be of relevance to all students of different backgrounds and age mainly because of how it improved communication and bridged the social-economic gap among the students. Students opted to have a smartphone after coming to colleges because of its relevance. Yelton (2012) discovered that smartphones and other portable devices bridge the divide for many. In his research, he found that while some people choose to stick with cheaper phones and rate plan that

avoids extra charge for data, many more opt for smartphones that allow them to access the internet, check email, access a variety of applications and converse on social media. He furthermore, expressed his dislike on the education system of some countries who do not allow students to use technological devices in school. In agreement with Yelton (2012), Omaschiski (2014) added that many of today's college students are from generation Y, born between 1981 and 2001 hence, online socialization is more desirable to them than face to face interactions. In relation to Oberg's (1960) theory of adjustment to the new culture, during the honeymoon stage, it's important for first year students to use social networking sites to know their fellow first years so that they should be able to shade off some stress that they may experience as a result of acculturation.

4.4 Chapter summary

First year students experience both negative and positive effects of their acculturation process. First year students experience feelings of independence from parents' rules and expectations once they start college life. However, feelings of stress due to overwhelming college demands, financial challenges, accommodation difficulties, and challenges concerning academic and social well-being affect students negatively. The ability to access college services that foster the transition process and being able to make friends from the first year class whether using social networking sites or class interactions helps students cope with the effects of their acculturation process.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.0 Chapter overview

The current chapter provides the conclusion and the implications of the findings of the study on an exploration on acculturation among first year college students.

5.1 Conclusions and implications

The goal of this study was to explore the acculturation process among First year students in the sampled college. Upon research, several findings have been explored on how first year students acculturate to the college culture in reference to Oberg's (1960) U-Curve theory of cultural adjustment; honeymoon, culture shock, adjustment and adaptation. The study revealed that, the acculturation process affects college students' adaptation to the college culture both positively and negatively.

The study revealed that, acculturation leads to a feeling of independence among first year students. This implies that, First Year students learn to make informed decisions pertaining to their personal and academic lives, thereby knowing what is right and wrong and are able to accept the consequences of each decision that they make. The study findings also revealed that, first year students are mostly are stressed before and after starting college life. Students face problems to negotiate between their expectations and the reality of college life therefore they get frustrated. The implication is that, this affects them psychologically hence most of them fail to give time to their studies. In the end they fail exams and get withdrawn from college.

Furthermore the study findings indicated that financial instability was one of the most common problem among first year students. Hence most of them not being able to afford basic needs including food and school essentials. First Year students from the low socio economic background reported to not have been able to pay for accommodation or buy laptops needed for academic purposes. It was also revealed that some parents do not have current information that public college students no longer receive allowances from the government. As a result they send less amount of money that would only cater for few college expenses. The implication is that most students involve themselves in immoral behaviors including prostitution, theft and illegal businesses to support their needs.

Evidence from the study indicated that, accommodation was another challenge to many first year students. All the students except those with special learning needs indicated that they were living out of campus mostly in uncondusive environment to their learning like Lukasi area where the houses are mostly affordable but lack security. Several participants indicated to have had their things stolen as a result they developed feelings of not belonging to the college and appeared not settled. This implies that, First Year students who feel not belonging to the college, may never or find it hard to adapt to the college culture thereby increasing chances of academic failure and poor social integration.

The study findings revealed that first year students struggled academically transitioning into adult learning which mostly uses lecture method and also require research skills, which are mostly not used in secondary school. Due to unfamiliarity students reported

to have struggled accessing important information as the amount of information or knowledge absorbed by students may vary greatly from student to student. The implication is that students who do not adapt quickly tend to have major learning difficulties resulting into low self-esteem, which also affects their social integration skills.

The study findings also indicated that first year students struggled to locate classrooms during their first months in college because most of them were not familiar with the environment. First year students also reported to have been tricked by their friends from upper classes when they tried to look for a particular class. The Inability to locate classrooms made many of them to miss or fail to attend classes on time. This resulted into many of them missing out important information from the lectures. This implies that most students may fail to catch up with their friends leading into academic stress and anxiety.

The study findings also indicated that, first year students had undergone dressing transition. Students reported to have conformed to the college's dressing styles. However First Year Students from rural areas reported to have felt like being forced to change their dressing styles to conform to the college culture. As a result, those who could not afford good clothes risked being called names. The implication is that, failure to conform to the college's dressing styles would make other students have low self-esteem which would make them fail to academically and socially integrate into the college culture. Thereby risking quitting or being weeded in college.

The study found that, first year students acknowledged the consequences of unhealthy sexual relationships and drug and substance abuse. However, first year students felt that, having sexual relationships is personal since everyone is an adult. The students also said that, academic and social challenges which lead into frustrations or stress, are reasons why students abuse drugs and heavily drink alcohol. The implication is that, unhealthy sexual relationships and excessive use of drug and substance abuse may lead into the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and violence which in turn may cause First Year students to be withdrawn from college by the authorities.

The study findings acknowledged the role of college activities that facilitate the transition process of first year students like the orientation program, the dean of students and other student bodies that the college put in place. First year students reported to have benefited a lot from the orientation program however students with special learning needs found the whole orientation program not inclusive. The implication is that, the orientation program that is not inclusive may not foster a sense of belonging and pride in other students which in turn may bring in other problems like poor college adjustment.

The negative effects of acculturation from the findings are; stress, financial challenges, accommodation challenges, academic challenges, social challenges and difference in dressing and language. The findings also revealed that, students cope with their effects of their acculturation by accessing college services that facilitate transition process, social integration and through social networking sites. The implication is that, through college services that facilitate the transition process, students may be prepared

psychologically on how to deal with negative effects of their acculturation process. Students may also be able to know the right college offices to contact when faced with negative effects of their acculturation.

The study findings revealed that, First Year students had high expectations of college life. Such feelings came in because students felt that, going to college is a success and one step forward to a brighter future. Therefore the First Year students reported to have high expectations of college life. Unfortunately when first year students came to start college, they found out that, most of their expectations of higher education were far from the reality which lead into disappointment. The implication is that First Year students may feel disconnected from their assumptions and reality. This may lead to stress and anxiety which would in turn affect their academic performance and social integration. Furthermore, evidence from the study indicated that, peer interaction among first year students helped them integrate more easily to the college culture. Friends were a source of encouragement and an immediate help in times of financial, physical and emotional need. First year students chose friends that with whom they had common interest. This resulted into much more easier adjustment for those who had friends. The study also revealed that, social networking sites helped many students gain friends and also being updated with what was happening in the college. The implication is that, students who have easily adjusted due to peer interaction may excel in their academic and social life.

The study also found that, the orientation program that students had during their first weeks of school, helped many students adjust much easily to the college culture,

however first year students complained that, they were not oriented on issues concerning the college map, as a result many first year students missed classes to failure in locating class venues. The study also revealed that, the orientation program was not inclusive in nature especially for students with special learning needs. The implication is that students who may be left out during orientation program due to not being inclusive may experience stress and anxiety which may affect their academic and social adjustment in the college.

5.2 Areas of further Research

This study explored on the common effects of acculturation process among first year students and how they cope with the effects of their acculturation process. A similar study can be done on the acculturation process among first year students in private universities. So too another study can also be done to understand how the first year students' acculturation process affects the college retention rate. The other study can also be done to have an in-depth knowledge of the impact of the orientation programs on the acculturation of first year students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Consent Form for first year Participants

Good morning/ afternoon. I am, Chisomo E Chirambo. I am seeking information for my masters of Education dissertation on **AN EXPLORATION OF ACCULTURATION AMONG COLLEGE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS: A CASE OF BACHELOR EDUCATION STUDENTS**. The information gathered here shall be confidential and will only be used for my dissertation and no names will be included in the dissertation.

This interview is being conducted to get your experiences of acculturation as a first year student. I am interested mostly on how the acculturation process has affected you personally, and how you have managed to cope with the effects of the acculturation process. The interview is going to take about 1 hour.

I would like to ask your consent to use a tape recorder during the interview so that I should not miss any vital information and also to save time, if you do not mind.

Consent Statement: I understand and agree to participate in this study by filling out this out this interview as completely and accurately as possible

Signature/ Mark.....

Date of the Interview.....

Student's Gender.....

Degree program Specialization.....

Age Range (Tick below)

14-18

18-21

21-25

25-29

Appendix 2: Consent form for Key Informants

Good morning/ afternoon. I am, Chisomo E Chirambo studying Sociology in Education. I am seeking information for my masters of Education dissertation on **AN EXPLORATION OF ACCULTURATION PROCESS AMONG COLLEGE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS: A CASE OF BACHELOR EDUCATION STUDENTS**. The information gathered here shall be confidential and will only be used for my dissertation and no names will be included in the dissertation. Our interview is going to take about 1 hour.

I understand you work with students and you deal with issues concerning their welfare. My main concern is on how first year students experience the process of acculturation as they study various programs at the College.

I would like to ask your consent to use a tape recorder during the interview so that I should not miss any vital information and also to save time, if you do not mind.

Name of Interviewer.....

Date.....

Student's Gender.....

Staff Position

Appendix 3: In-depth Interview guide for the Key informants

1. By the way, “what does your office deal with?”
2. “How would you describe the first year students’ feelings when they first arrive here at the college?”
 - a. Probe “why do you think they have such kind of feelings?”
3. “How would you describe this first year class according to your experiences in handling their issues?”
4. “What are the common challenges they meet when they start schooling at the college?”
5. “What are the specific challenges that Students (with special learning needs, older students, Younger students, girls/ boys)”
 - a. “Why do you think they meet with such challenges once they start schooling at the college?”
6. “Are there any cases relating to accommodation since this year the college had two first year cohorts?”
7. I understand some students come from their parents’ homes and some have never lived an independent life, “how do you think living an independent life affects some first year students?”
8. Are there any special cases of students finding challenges living independent life that you have dealt with as an office?
9. “Most people have sexual relationships as one way of independence at the college, how does that affect first year students?”
10. “How do first year students cope with challenges relating to sexual relationships?”
11. I understand some students drink beer or use drugs, “how does that affect first year students’ social and academic life?”
12. “How do you think first year students’ dressing styles are affected by the other students from the upper classes?”

13. With your experiences with students, “Do you think first year student’s dressing styles are affected by the college environment?”
14. “How did they cope with such challenges of different dressing styles of fellow students?”
15. “Have you had students battling with their self-esteem?”
 - a. “Why do you think they had such kind of a feeling?”
16. “How do you think the college culture affects their academic performance?”
17. “Do you think students have any problems with acquiring learning materials and how to manage class time tables even when though they were oriented?”
 - a. “How do they cope with such challenges?”
18. “Has there been cases where some first year students wanted/ had to quit school?”
Why?
19. “How did you deal with such a challenge?” Why?
20. “What does college do to support the transition process of students into the college environment?”
21. “Is there anything more that you think the college should be doing to help students adapt to the college environment?”
22. “What does the college do to support the transition of students into the college culture?”
23. “What are your experiences both (negative and positive) that you would like to share whilst dealing with students’ welfare?”

Appendix 4: In-depth Interview guide for the first year social studies students

1. “How did you feel when you first heard that you are to start school here at college?”
 - a. Probe; “Why did you have such kind of a feeling?”
2. “As a new student, what were the things that you were looking forward to?”
 - b. Probe: “Why were you looking forward to such things?”
3. “What are the things that you were anxious about as a new student?”
 - a. Probe: “Why did you did you have such fears?”
4. “Before coming to college, did you have any information about social life at the school?”
 - a. How did you get that information?
 - b. How do you think that Information affected how you settled in at the college?
5. “How did you feel the minute you arrived at the college?”
 - a. Probe: “Why did you have such a feeling?”
6. “Did you find accommodation here on campus/ outside the campus?”
 - b. Probe “If Yes/ No, how did you feel living in campus/ outside the campus?”
7. The college usually organizes orientation program for first year student, “What did you find to be important in your first year orientation program?”
8. “What are the things you wish could have been included in the orientation program that could have helped you fit in the college environment?”
9. “What kind of friends were you able to associate with immediately you started your life at the College?”
 - a. “Probe: were they from secondary school, hostel, or Church etc.? “
 - b. “Why did you choose such friends that you had?”
10. “Have you now changed or you are still socializing with your first-time friends?”
 - a. “Why are you still/ not charting with your first time friends?”

- b.** “What role did your friends play in your adjustment to the college life?”
11. “Possibly you were then staying at your parents’ home, how did you feel that you are now supposed to do things independently?”
- a.** Probe: “Why did you have such a feeling?”
12. “What are some of the challenges that you endured are you were living an independent life?”
- a.** “How did you cope up with the challenges of living independently?”
 - b.** “Which skills did you specifically used to cope with such challenges?”
13. As one way of being independent, you are expected to manage your personal finances when you get to college, “how was your experience?”
- a.** “Did you have any challenges? Why?”
 - b.** “How did you overcome these challenges?”
14. “Other students show their independence by having sexual relationships they get to college, what do you think about it? Why?”
- a.** “How does having a sexual relationship affect them? Why?”
 - b.** “How do you think they cope with challenges relating to sexual relationships?”
15. “Similarly most people start to drink at college, why do you think they do that?”
- a.** “How does that affect them?”
 - b.** “How do you think thy cope with these challenges?”
16. “What was the kind of dressing were you comfortable with before coming to college?” Why?
- a.** “Has your dressing changed?” How? Why?
17. “Did you find any difficulties adapting to different dressing styles of fellow students?”
- a.** “How did you cope with the challenges of dressing styles?”
18. “What language did you speak before coming to college?”

- a.** “How different or similar was it to the other students both old and new?”
 - b.** “How did you learn the new college language if so?”
- 19. “Did you belong to any social networking sites (eg. Facebook, Twitter, whatsApp) when you were joining college? Why?”
- 20. “Did the use of any of the social networking sites affect the way you blended in to college life? How? Why?”
- 21. “Do you use the social networking sites now? How? Why?”
- 22. “What are some of the challenges that you are meeting in your first year of schooling as you are trying to blend in to college’s culture?”
 - a.** “Has there been a moment where you felt like quitting college?” “Why?”
 - b.** “What made you stay?” “How have you been managing?”
- 23. “Academically, how was your self-esteem when you first came to college? (Maybe having heard of issues of being weeded, etc)
- 24. “How do you think your academic self-esteem was affected by:
 - a.** Friends? Why?
 - b.** Continuing students? Why?
 - c.** Lecturers? Why?
- 25. “What were your fears on academic success?”
- 26. “How would you describe your experience in accessing learning resources immediately you started attending classes here at college?”
 - a.** Did you have any challenges? Why?
 - b.** How did you overcome such challenges?
- 27. “How would you describe your experience in locating class venues immediately you started attending classes here at college?”
 - a.** Did you have any challenges? Why?
 - b.** How did you overcome such challenges?

28. “Comparing with secondary school environment, what did you do to be different in the teaching methods?”

a. “How did it affect you?”

b. “How did you cope?”

29. “What are some of the positive things that you have experienced as you are blended in to the college life?”

a. Probe, “what is the most memorable positive experience that you have encountered in your first year?”

30. If you are to mentor a secondary school leaver who wants to study at college, what would be your advice on how to adapt to a college environment as a student/

31. “Is there anything else you would like to share?”

Appendix 5: Participants and their pseudonyms

Participants	Fake Names
Rural female student	Tiyanjane
Urban female student	Sonia
Married female student	Chifuniro
Special needs female student	Florence
Urban male student	David
Married male student	Ayanja
Special needs male student	Ebenezer
Rural male student	Alfred
The officer for students affairs	Mr. Moyo
The students representative for special needs	Mphatso
Special needs specialist	Mr. Chinguwo
The College Students President	Richard
Assistant Registrar for social welfare	Mrs. Chakwana
Near College area	Chigalu area