

Abstract

The objectives of this research entitled "The Study of the Effects of the Environment on the Mental Health of Students at Thammasat University, Rangsit Campus" are to look into the problems that first year students studying in the academic year 1987 at Thammasat University, Rangsit Campus, might have. The areas under investigation include students' adjustment to their environment in terms of their studies, their relationships with instructors, and their relationships with their peers. Personal factors which may contribute to problems in adjusting to the environment are also considered ; these are, namely, sex, the faculty enrolled in, father's occupation, mother's occupation, parents' or family's income, place of origin, and place of residence while studying at Thammasat University, Rangsit.

The instrument used in collecting data is a 96 item rating scale questionnaire covering 3 areas of students' adjustment : their studies, their relationships with instructors, and their relationships with their peers. Its reliability is .97 and its validity is in the type of face validity where questionnaires were sent to 10 specialists in psychology and mental health for each item to be approved for what it was meant to measure. Selection was made of items that were agreed on by 75% of the specialists.

The sample group includes 563 first year students studying in the academic year 1987 from every faculty, namely, Law, Commerce and Accountancy, Political Science, Economics, Social Welfare, Journalism and Mass Communication, Social Studies and Anthropology, Liberal Arts, and Science and Technology.

The results of data analysis are as follows :

1. Sample students' personal information consists of 7 variables :
 - 1.1 Sex - the majority of students in the sample group are female.
 - 1.2 Faculty - the majority of students in the sample group are from the Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy and from Liberal Arts.
 - 1.3 Father's occupation - the majority are found to be involved in business, and to be employed by companies, organizations or the private sector, and by the government.
 - 1.4 Mother's occupation - the majority are housewives with the next largest group being involved in business.
 - 1.5 Parents' income per month - the majority are found to have more than ฿ 15,000 with the next largest group in the range of ฿ 9,000 - 11,000 per month.
 - 1.6 Place of origin - the majority are from Bangkok with the next largest group from provinces in the central region near Bangkok.
 - 1.7 Place of residence while studying at Thammasat, Rangsit - Most students live with their parents with the next largest group living in Thammasat University Rangsit dormitory.
2. The results of the comparison between problems concerning students' studies, their relationships with their instructors, and their relationships with their peers show that students have most problems in their studies, fewer in their relationship with their peers, and fewest in their relationship with their instructors.
3. The results concerning students' personal factors effecting the areas under investigation (sex, faculty, fathers' occupation, mothers' occupation, parents' monthly income, place of origin, and place of residence while studying at Thammasat University, Rangsit) are as follows :

3.1 Students' Studies There are 32 questions on the questionnaire in this area. Analysis of the data shows that the differences in the responses in none of the 7 variables had any significant effect in this area.

However, after analysing the items which show more problems relating to students' studies ($\bar{X} \geq 3.00$), 9 out of 32 items, the results are as follow :

Feelings towards competitive learning, worries relating to learning, time allotted to learning, and insecurity in the learning environment vary with sex and faculty. Female students have more problems in adjusting than male students in all the four areas mentioned. Liberal Arts students worry more about competitive learning than Political Science students. Science students have more worries relating to learning than Political Science students. Science students, again, have more troubles in the allotment of time to learning than Social Welfare students. Finally, Law students feel more insecure in the learning environment than Economics students. The differences in other personal factors, i.e. as fathers' occupation, mothers' occupation, parents' monthly income, place of origin, and place of residence while studying at Thammasat University, Rangsit, were not found to have an effect on the four areas mentioned.

The feelings that "some instructors are too fast in teaching" or "there is lack of confidence in studying, taking examinations, and working" were found more in female than in male students. However, the feelings that "there are problems in learning and in taking lecture notes," "learning is so boring that one has to divert one's attention to other things" and "there is a lack of desire to attend classes of instructors one does not like" are found to be similar regardless of personal factors involved.

3.2 Relationships between students and instructors There are 27 questions on the questionnaire in this area. Analysis of the data shows that the differences in personal factors do not cause any significant differences in the students' relationships with their instructors.

However, after analysing all the items, four items are found to have high relevancy to the area under investigation. They include, in order of frequency, "lack of informal communication with instructors," "not obeying the instructors is not unusual if the students think that the instructors are not fair" and the last two items with the same frequency are "feeling of uneasiness in going to see instructors" and "lack of privacy in the instructors' offices hinders the desire for discussion as there are other instructors present."

The differences in the 7 personal factors do not cause any differences in the sample groups' feelings towards the first three items above ; however, students reside in temples, former school teachers's residences, or rented houses have more problems concerning privacy in the instructors' offices than students who live with their parents.

3.3 Relationships between students and their peers. There are 37 questions in this area in the questionnaire. Most personal factors (sex, faculty enrolled in, father's occupation, mother's occupation, and place of residence while studying at Thammasat University, Rangsit) have no effect on the relationships students have with their peers. This is with the exception of students who differ in their parents' income and who differ in place of origin ; this sample group finds difficulty in adjusting themselves with their peers. Students with parents with an income of $\text{฿ } 3,000 - 5,000$ per month have more difficulty in this area than those with parents with an income of more than $\text{฿ } 15,000$ per month. Students from the northeast also have more problems in this area than those from Bangkok.

After analysing all the items, the top three 'problem' items are "the feeling of loneliness when without friends", "uneasiness in requesting help from friends," and "the feeling that friends are not sincere to each other." Students with different personal factors show similar reactions to "the feeling of loneliness when without friends" and "uneasiness in requesting help from friends." Students with parents of low income ($\text{฿ } 3,000 - 5,000$ per month) have stronger opinions towards "the feeling that friends are not sincere to each other" than those with parents

of higher income (more than $\text{฿ } 15,000$ per month). The same also applies to students who live in Thammasat University, Rangsit dormitory than those living with their parents. Differences in other areas, i.e. sex, faculty, father's occupation, mother's occupation, and place of origin, show no influence on students' feelings in this aspect.

3.4 Self - adjustment in all 3 areas (Students' studies ; relationships between students and instructors ; relationships between students and their peers). There are altogether 96 items on the questionnaire. Students differing in all 7 personal factors find no difference in self-adjustment in all 3 areas in general. However, students with parents of different incomes show differences in adjusting in all areas in general ; that is, students with parents of higher income (more than $\text{฿ } 15,000$ per month) can adjust better than students with parents of lower income ($\text{฿ } 3,000 - 5,000$ per month).