



AN ANALYSIS OF THE ADJUSTMENT OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS AT STIKES ST. ELISABETH KEUSKUPAN MAUMERE IN 2024

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Abstract. The success of first-year students in higher education is closely linked to their ability to adapt to the academic and social environment of college life. This study aims to identify the level of adjustment among first-year students at STIKES St. Elisabeth Keuskupan Maumere and to examine differences based on demographic variables, including gender, age, and academic program. A quantitative approach with a descriptive-comparative design was employed, involving 95 participants selected through accidental sampling. Data were collected using the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), which has been validated and proven reliable. The results indicate a generally good level of student adjustment, with the highest scores found in academic and institutional dimensions. Independent t-tests and ANOVA revealed significant differences based on gender ($p = 0.016$) and academic program ($p = 0.004$), but not age ($p = 0.164$). These findings highlight the need for adaptive support strategies that consider gender-specific and program-specific characteristics to enhance student adjustment and academic success.

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INTRODUCTION

Entering a new situation is a common experience in human life. Each individual responds differently to unfamiliar environments. Some are able to adapt and embrace the dynamics of change, while others struggle to adjust. This phenomenon is also evident among first-year college students as they transition into university life. Students who respond positively tend to feel more comfortable engaging in the learning process, whereas those who are unprepared often face a variety of challenges. Rahayu & Rianti (2020) identified several common difficulties encountered by first-year students, including differences between high school and university learning systems, an increased academic workload, difficulties in joining student organizations, and challenges in building social relationships. Gunarsa as cited in Claudia et al. (2023) also noted that students' adjustment difficulties are partly due to differences in instructional methods commonly applied in higher education settings.

Environmental and situational changes faced by first-year college students significantly influence their level of adjustment. Students who are well-adjusted typically demonstrate more optimal academic performance. In contrast, poor adjustment can lead to psychological problems such as stress, fatigue, loss of focus, and even procrastination (Calhoun & Acocella, 1990; Purnamasari et al., 2022; Choi et al., 2022). According to data from the American College Testing Service, approximately 50% of college students do not complete their studies on time, and around 40% drop out before graduation—most commonly during their first or second year (Rahmadani & Mukti, 2020). In Indonesia, records show that as many as 375,134 college students dropped out in 2022 (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, 2022).

The high dropout rate, as previously discussed, underscores the urgency of developing students' adjustment abilities in coping with the complexities of campus life. Adjustment is not only a supporting factor for academic success but also plays a crucial role in shaping students' academic and social satisfaction (Hassan et al., 2023; Siah et al., 2022; Madson et al., 2022). Students who successfully adjust tend to have more positive college experiences, are able to

build healthy social networks, and demonstrate consistent academic performance. In contrast, failure to adapt may lead to feelings of alienation, psychological distress, and even the decision to prematurely terminate their studies (Nisa et al., 2022). Schneiders as cited in H. & Wicaksono (2023) defines adjustment as a crucial personal capacity for coping with needs, tensions, conflicts, and frustrations, in order to achieve harmony between individual demands and environmental expectations. Calhoun and Acocella as cited in Hidayah (2021) add that adjustment involves a continuous interaction between the individual, others, and the campus environment. Bakker & Mostert (2024) also emphasizes that adjustment encompasses responses to both internal and external demands.

According to Baker and Siryk as cited in Rahmadani & Mukti (2020), first-year college student adjustment encompasses four key dimensions: academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment. These dimensions reflect the extent to which students are able to manage various academic, social, emotional, and institutional challenges throughout their college journey (Gao et al., 2023). Academic adjustment focuses on how students cope with academic demands, as demonstrated by clarity of academic goals, active participation in learning activities, strong academic achievement, and satisfaction with the academic environment (Cassaretto et al., 2022; Michaeli Manee et al., 2024). Social adjustment refers to students' ability to form healthy social relationships and adapt to the campus environment, including satisfaction with campus life and extracurricular involvement. Personal-emotional adjustment centers on students' psychological well-being in facing academic pressures, such as the ability to manage anxiety and maintain physical health (David Pérez et al., 2025). Institutional adjustment reflects the degree of students' commitment to their educational institution, including a sense of belonging, pride, and satisfaction with their college or university (Cinkir et al., 2022). Students are considered to have achieved optimal adjustment when they are able to develop and maintain a balanced integration of all four dimensions throughout their academic experience.

Several previous studies have emphasized the importance of first-year students' adjustment across academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional domains within the higher education environment. Rahayu & Arianti (2020) in a study conducted at the Faculty of Psychology, Satya Wacana Christian University, found that most first-year students exhibited a moderate level of adjustment across all dimensions. The percentages of adjustment achieved were 70.04% in the academic domain, 76.21% in the social domain, 69.60% in the personal-emotional domain, and 63.44% in the institutional domain. These findings suggest that although students demonstrated a fair ability to adapt, they had not yet reached an optimal level of adjustment. Meanwhile, Syahid & Azmi Rozali (2021), through a study involving 100 students from Esa Unggul University in Jakarta, identified two categories of student adjustment: 56% of participants fell into the high adjustment category, while the remaining 44% were categorized as having low adjustment. These results highlight varying levels of readiness among new students to adapt to the academic dynamics of university life.

A study conducted by Lestarina & Purwantini (2023) involving 68 first-year students at a health sciences college (STIKES) in Surabaya, using the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), revealed variations in students' adjustment patterns to the academic environment. The majority of students exhibited low levels of adjustment in the academic (54.4%) and social (63.2%) domains. In contrast, 63.2% of students demonstrated good adjustment in the personal-emotional domain, reflecting adequate emotional regulation capacity. However, institutional adjustment also remained low (54.4%). These findings suggest that although first-year students were relatively capable of emotional adaptation, they continued to face challenges in meeting academic demands, forming social connections, and developing a strong sense of institutional attachment—factors that may affect their persistence and continuity in higher education (Kural & Özyurt, 2023; Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2023).

A similar study was conducted by Barus et al. (2024) involving 99 first-year students in the Nursing Program at STIKES St. Elisabeth Medan. The results showed that the majority of students (68.7%) demonstrated a high level of adjustment, while the remaining 31.3% were



categorized as having a moderate level of adjustment. These findings indicate that first-year students in the Nursing Program generally possess strong adaptive capacities, particularly in responding to academic demands.

Most studies on first-year student adjustment have predominantly focused on urban areas outside of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). However, data from the [Directorate General of Higher Education \(2022\)](#) reported that 2,631 students in NTT dropped out of college, representing approximately 5% of the total active student population. This finding highlights significant challenges in the academic, social, and emotional adjustment processes of university students, particularly in 3T regions (frontier, outermost, and underdeveloped areas). Furthermore, data released by the [BPS NTT \(2024\)](#) indicate that the rate of higher education attainment among individuals aged 15 and above remains low, with only about 10 percent having successfully completed tertiary education.

Nevertheless, studies that specifically examine the context of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), particularly in Maumere–Flores region, remain very limited. Most existing research instead focuses on students from NTT who pursue higher education outside the province. Findings by [Sulistyoningrum & Kusnadi \(2020\)](#) indicate that self-efficacy is positively correlated with the adjustment ability of NTT students studying in Surabaya. This suggests that an individual's belief in their own competence plays a significant role in responding to the adaptive challenges of college life. Meanwhile, another study by [Dhei et al. \(2020\)](#) found a significant negative relationship between student adjustment levels and culture shock among first-semester NTT students. These findings indicate that lower levels of adjustment are associated with a higher likelihood of experiencing cultural stress during the academic adaptation process.

This reality indicates that students from East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), including those who pursue higher education within the region, face complex adjustment challenges. Therefore, there is a pressing need for research that specifically explores the dynamics of first-year student adjustment within the local context. In light of this background, the present study aims to describe the level of adjustment among first-year students at STIKES St. Elisabeth Keuskupan Maumere in 2024, while also analyzing differences in adjustment levels based on gender, age, and academic program. This research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the adjustment process among new students, encompassing academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional dimensions. The choice of Maumere-Flores as the study site is intended to contribute to the enrichment of educational psychology and student development literature, and to serve as an empirical basis for higher education institutions in Maumere to design intervention programs that support the academic success of first-year students.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a descriptive quantitative approach, a method that generates findings based on numerical data through the application of statistical procedures or other forms of quantification ([Ghanad, 2023](#)). The research subjects consisted of first-year students currently enrolled at STIKES St. Elisabeth Keuskupan Maumere, with a total sample of 95 students drawn from three academic programs: Nursing, Physiotherapy, and Medical Informatics. The sampling technique used in this study was accidental sampling, which involves selecting participants based on unplanned encounters with students on campus who voluntarily agreed to participate ([Azwar, 2009](#)). This technique was chosen due to the heterogeneous nature of the population and the researchers' limited access and time to reach all first-year students at STIKES St. Elisabeth Keuskupan Maumere. This method is considered appropriate for exploratory research aimed at gaining an initial understanding of the adjustment phenomenon among new college students, particularly in Maumere, where a flexible approach is often more effective and realistic for field data collection.

Data collection in this study was conducted using the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), an instrument developed by [Baker & Siryk \(1984; 1999\)](#) to assess students' adjustment to college life across four key dimensions: academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment to the institution. The SACQ has



been widely utilized in various cultural and educational contexts to evaluate students' ability to adapt to the demands of higher education (Melendez, 2015; Sadewo et al., 2020; Donado et al., 2021). In this study, the SACQ was translated and culturally adapted into Indonesian by Nyimas & Rulangi (2022) to ensure linguistic clarity and contextual relevance. The translated version was then tested for validity and reliability to confirm its suitability for use with first-year students (Rifameutia & Malay, 2023). The adaptation process involved a translation procedure using forward translation and back translation techniques by bilingual experts to ensure the equivalence of meaning between the original and translated versions.

The adapted version of the SACQ instrument consists of four main subscales: academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional adjustment (Nyimas & Rulangi, 2022). The instrument includes statements in two forms: favorable (aligned with the theoretical direction) and unfavorable (opposing the theoretical direction), measured using a 4-point Likert scale (Arikunto, 2014; Priyatno, 2002). For favorable items: Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4); for unfavorable items, the scoring is reversed: Strongly Disagree (4) to Strongly Agree (1). Scores from each subscale were calculated to reflect the students' levels of adjustment across the four examined dimensions. The data analysis technique began with validity and reliability testing of the questionnaire items, followed by a normality test, and subsequently the categorization of adjustment scores. The adjustment categories were analyzed based on respondent characteristics, namely gender, age, and academic program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation of first-year student adjustment at STIKES St. Elisabeth Keuskupan Maumere begins with a general description of the characteristics of the study participants. This approach is essential to provide initial context regarding the respondents' demographic backgrounds, which may influence their academic, social, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. The distribution of respondents by gender, age range, and academic program is detailed in Table 1 to support further analysis and provide a more comprehensive interpretation of the research findings.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender, Age, and Study Program

Variable		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	21	22,1
	Female	74	77,9
Age Group	17-19	69	72,6
	20-24	25	26,3
	25-29	1	1,1
Study Program	Nursing	41	43,2
	Physiotherapy	20	21,1
	Medical Informatics	34	35,7

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondent characteristics based on gender, age, and academic program. This study involved 95 first-year students at STIKES St. Elisabeth Keuskupan Maumere as research participants. In terms of gender, the majority of respondents were female (n = 74; 77.9%), while male respondents accounted for 21 individuals (22.1%). Regarding age, most participants were in the 17–19 age group (72.6%), followed by the 20–24 age group (26.3%), with only 1.1% falling into the 25–29 age range. Based on academic program, respondents were distributed across three study programs: Nursing (43.2%), Medical Informatics (35.7%), and Physiotherapy (21.1%).

The distribution of respondents by gender indicates a predominance of female students at 77.9%. This finding reflects a common trend in health-related higher education institutions in Indonesia, where programs such as Nursing and Physiotherapy tend to attract more female students (Yuspiani & Goncing, 2023). Meanwhile, the dominance of respondents in the 17–19 age group suggests that most first-year students are recent high school graduates who transitioned directly to higher education without a significant gap. This age group typically falls



within the developmental stage of emerging adulthood, a period that, according to [Arnett \(2000\)](#) is critical for identity formation and adjustment to new environments, including college life.

The next step involved testing the validity, reliability, and normality of the data. The validity of the 35 items measuring student adjustment was assessed based on the principle that an item is considered valid if the calculated correlation coefficient (r-value) exceeds the critical r-value from the correlation table at a 5% significance level ([Priyatno, 2002](#)). Conversely, an item is deemed invalid if the r-value is lower than the critical threshold. The validity test in this study was conducted using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation technique for all items in the adjustment scale. The analysis results showed that all items met the validity criteria, with correlation coefficients (r-values) ranging from 0.205 to 0.538. According to general guidelines on validity ([Misbahuddin & Hasan, 2014](#)), an item is declared valid if the r-value exceeds the table value at the 5% significance level. In this study, with 95 respondents, the critical r-value for a two-tailed test at $\alpha = 0.05$ was 0.202. Since all items yielded r-values greater than this threshold, it can be concluded that all statements in the adjustment scale meet the validity requirements.

Meanwhile, instrument reliability was evaluated to assess the consistency of the instrument in producing stable and accurate data. According to [Subhaktiyasa \(2024\)](#), an instrument is considered reliable if it yields consistent measurements when administered repeatedly under the same conditions. A reliable instrument ensures the stability of measurement outcomes. In this study, reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha (α). Based on [Azwar's \(2012\)](#) guideline, an instrument is deemed reliable if α exceeds 0.70; conversely, it is considered unreliable if α is below 0.70. The reliability test in this study yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.78, indicating that all items in the adjustment scale meet the reliability criteria and are suitable for further analysis.

The normality test aims to determine whether the research data follow a normal distribution. This is essential because normal distribution is one of the fundamental assumptions in the application of parametric statistical techniques ([Sangadji & M.M., 2010](#)). The decision criterion is based on the significance value: if $p > 0.05$, the data are considered normally distributed; conversely, if $p < 0.05$, the data are considered not normally distributed. The results of the test showed a significance value of 0.200. Therefore, since the value exceeds 0.05, it can be concluded that the data on student adjustment are normally distributed.

The results of validity, reliability, and normality testing serve as the foundation for proceeding to the next stage of this study, which involves categorizing first-year student adjustment based on the four subscales of adjustment: academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional. Descriptive statistics of first-year student adjustment across these four subscales are presented in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of First-Year Student Adjustment

Adjustment Subscale	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	General Interpretation
Academic	33	48	40,60	3,78	Moderate-High
Social	20	40	33,65	3,41	Moderate
Personal-Emotional	9	32	21,55	4,96	Moderate, tending to Low
Institutional	11	20	18,65	1,89	Moderate

[Table 2](#) presents the descriptive statistics of first-year student adjustment at STIKES St. Elisabeth Keuskupan Maumere across the four measured subscales: academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment. The results indicate that academic adjustment had the highest mean score among the four subscales, with $M = 40.60$; $SD = 3.78$. This suggests a relatively good level of academic adjustment, reflecting that students have generally been able to cope with academic demands. However, there remains a need to strengthen skills in time management and the application of effective learning strategies. Conceptually, academic adjustment refers to the internalization process by which individuals respond to academic

demands in higher education, including the ability to manage academic workload, set realistic academic goals, and develop productive learning attitudes and behaviors (Mao, 2024).

Lepsley & Edgerton (Claudia et al., 2023) stated that students with good academic adjustment are characterized by their ability to complete their studies on time, maintain stable mental health, and demonstrate satisfactory academic performance. This finding is consistent with the perspective of Syahid & Rosali (2021), who noted that students with a high level of academic adjustment tend to exhibit consistent learning motivation, optimal task completion, active participation in academic activities, and a focused and sustained learning orientation.

Furthermore, the results of the descriptive analysis indicate that the social adjustment of first-year students at STIKES St. Elisabeth Keuskupan Maumere falls within the moderate category ($M = 33.65$; $SD = 3.41$). This suggests that most students are generally able to respond to social and interpersonal demands within the campus environment, although they face challenges related to the diversity of cultural backgrounds, languages, and values from their regions of origin. Theoretically, social adjustment reflects an individual's ability to establish harmonious relationships through behaviors aligned with social norms in higher education settings (Aini et al., 2024). In the campus context, indicators of social adjustment include comfort within the campus environment, satisfaction with social life, openness to interaction, and active participation in student activities.

This finding aligns with the study by Seffila (2023) which revealed that first-year students are generally able to adapt socially, particularly when supported by an open and inclusive campus environment. However, for students from regions with limited intercultural interaction, social adjustment may be more challenging. Therefore, it is essential for educational institutions to create a supportive environment for students' social adjustment through initiatives such as group guidance programs, character development based on local wisdom, and the provision of intercultural interaction spaces. This approach is crucial for fostering collective solidarity and students' psychological well-being. Ramli & Dewi (2021) emphasized that students from culturally distinct backgrounds often require more time to feel socially accepted. Meanwhile, data from BPS NTT (2024) recorded that 2,631 students in the region dropped out of college in 2022, highlighting that poor adjustment capacity can be a significant risk factor.

Next, the personal-emotional adjustment subscale recorded the lowest mean score among all dimensions ($M = 21.55$; $SD = 4.96$), indicating significant psychological and emotional pressure among first-year students. Although the majority fall within the moderate category, approximately 13.7% of students are in the low category, signaling difficulties in emotional regulation and psychological stability. Personal-emotional adjustment involves the ability to cope with academic and social pressures in a healthy manner, including managing stress, overcoming anxiety, and maintaining emotional balance (Baker & Siryk, 1984). Imbalances in this area may manifest in symptoms such as anxiety, depression, uncontrolled anger, as well as physical disturbances such as fatigue, insomnia, and somatization.

This finding is consistent with Utomo et al. (2023) who reported that limited access to mental health services increases the risk of emotional adjustment difficulties. In Maumere, psychological services remain scarce, both in terms of professional personnel and supporting facilities, further compounding students' adjustment burdens. Classically, Schneiders as cited in Kozan & Arslan (2022) emphasized that emotional instability hinders both academic and social adaptation. Deng et al. (2022) confirmed that chronic stress and depression are negatively associated with academic performance and social integration among first-year students. Fadilla (2024) found that emotional maturity plays a positive role in supporting the adjustment process of new college students. Meanwhile, research by Fitriya & Kartika (2024) revealed that self-regulation also has a significant impact on students' adjustment during the early phase of campus life. Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions strengthen counseling services, provide stress management training, and develop emotional development programs grounded in local cultural values to enhance the psychological resilience of first-year students.

Finally, on the institutional adjustment subscale, first-year students at STIKES St. Elisabeth Keuskupan Maumere were found to be in the moderate category ($M = 18.65$; $SD = 1.89$). This indicates that while students have begun to feel a degree of fit with the campus, emotional attachment and long-term commitment have not yet been strongly established. Geographic factors, limited facilities, and a lack of campus activities present challenges in fostering a strong sense of belonging and institutional identity (Yong et al., 2025). Institutional adjustment is a key factor in supporting student retention and loyalty, as it is closely related to the extent to which individuals feel part of the campus community and are willing to engage actively in the learning process (Tinto, 2017). In this context, positive perceptions of academic services, transparency in campus management, and opportunities for involvement in institutional activities can enhance students' sense of connection (Yilmaz et al., 2022).

Previous studies have shown that institutional attachment is positively correlated with learning satisfaction and students' academic achievement (Panggabean et al., 2023). In addition, psychological factors such as emotional maturity and self-regulation also play a role in strengthening institutional adjustment (Sari, 2021). Furthermore, sustained relationships between students and the institution foster student loyalty and reinforce their commitment (Snijders et al., 2022). Therefore, STIKES should enhance its institutional identity through comprehensive orientation programs, the reinforcement of core institutional values, and the active involvement of students in decision-making processes and campus community activities. These strategies not only increase students' sense of belonging and satisfaction with the institution, but also help build emotional bonds that form the foundation for study continuity and active engagement in academic life (Susan et al., 2023).

These findings support the model proposed by Baker & Siryk (1984) which emphasizes that academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adjustment are interrelated subscales that must be managed in an integrated manner. The model highlights that difficulties or disruptions in one dimension of adjustment can impact the others, thereby requiring a holistic intervention approach. In the local context of STIKES St. Elisabeth Keuskupan Maumere, socially and geographically grounded strategies are crucial in supporting the successful adaptation of first-year students, particularly given that students in the Maumere region often face complex challenges such as limited access to education, cultural diversity, and geographic conditions that influence the dynamics of college adjustment.

The primary objective of this study is to identify the level of adjustment among first-year students at STIKES St. Elisabeth Keuskupan Maumere and to explore potential differences based on demographic variables, namely gender, age, and academic program. This objective necessitates the use of inferential statistical analysis to determine whether significant variations exist across demographic groups. Inferential testing provides empirical evidence to support or refute hypotheses regarding student adjustment patterns. The results of these inferential analyses based on gender, age, and academic program are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Inferential Test Results of First-Year Student Adjustment

Variable	Group	Test Method	Test Statistic	p-value
Gender	Male	t-test	$t = -2,568$	0,016
	Female			
Study Program	Nursing	One Way ANOVA	$F = 5,678$	0,004
	Physiotherapy			
	Medical Informatics			
Age	17-19	One Way ANOVA	$F = 1,852$	0,164
	20-24			
	25-29			

Table 3 presents the results of inferential tests aimed at identifying differences in first-year student adjustment based on three demographic variables: gender, academic program, and age. Analyses were conducted using an independent samples t-test for gender and one-way ANOVA for the other two variables. The results of the independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in adjustment between male and female students ($t = -2.568$; $p = 0.016$), with female

students demonstrating a higher level of adjustment. This finding supports [Seffila \(2023\)](#), who noted that female students tend to be more socially and emotionally adaptive. Additionally, [Fitriani et al. \(2024\)](#) found that female students possess higher academic resilience, enabling them to manage academic and social pressures more effectively. A study by [Santos et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Iskandar et al. \(2024\)](#) further confirmed that female students are more inclined to develop supportive social relationships and exhibit stronger emotional regulation skills than their male counterparts—factors that contribute significantly to successful academic and social adjustment. In the context of Maumere, cultural values that promote the resilience of women in education further reinforce these findings. Therefore, gender should be taken into account when designing orientation and adaptation support programs for new students.

Furthermore, the One-Way ANOVA analysis revealed a significant difference in levels of student adjustment based on academic program ($F = 5.678$; $p = 0.004$). Students from the nursing program tended to demonstrate better adjustment compared to those from physiotherapy and medical informatics. In line with this, [Naamati-Schneider & Alt \(2023\)](#) found that collaborative learning models in health-related fields foster more effective and sustainable student adaptation. [Gea \(2024\)](#) also observed that nursing students exhibited a higher level of institutional attachment. These findings suggest that academic environments, curriculum structures, and patterns of peer interaction vary across programs and significantly influence how students adjust ([Ferezagja, 2019](#); [Subagio et al., 2021](#); [Islamiyah et al., 2024](#)). Nursing students, for instance, may adapt more quickly due to the structured and collaborative nature of their learning environment, as opposed to medical informatics students, who face more individualized and technologically demanding learning contexts. Therefore, curriculum structure and instructional dynamics within each academic program are key factors influencing student adjustment.

Lastly, regarding the age group variable, the One-Way ANOVA yielded an F-value of 1.852 with a p-value of 0.164, indicating no significant difference in adjustment levels among students aged 17–19, 20–24, and 25–29 years, as the p-value exceeds the 0.05 threshold. This finding is supported by studies by [Ramli & Dewi \(2021\)](#) and [Naz et al. \(2024\)](#) which indicate that psychosocial factors—such as social support, resilience, and engagement in campus communities—have a stronger influence on student adjustment than age itself. Although no statistically significant difference was found between age groups, the result remains noteworthy. It suggests that both younger students (17–19 years) and older students (20–24 and even 25–29 years) exhibit relatively similar levels of adjustment. In the context of STIKES St. Elisabeth Keuskupan Maumere, familial values, social solidarity, and community-based learning approaches likely serve as protective factors that support balanced adjustment across age groups. A recent study by [Litwic-Kaminska et al. \(2023\)](#) concluded that social elements, such as involvement in the community and environmental support, contribute more to student adaptation than chronological age. Nevertheless, students in older age groups may face additional challenges related to domestic responsibilities and financial pressures, which can cumulatively affect their adjustment processes ([Potter et al., 2020](#); [Moore et al., 2020](#); [Lyu et al., 2025](#)).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that the academic adjustment level of first-year students at STIKES St. Elisabeth Keuskupan Maumere is generally good, with the majority demonstrating a positive ability to adapt to the new academic environment. Significant differences were found in academic adjustment based on gender and study program, with female students and those enrolled in the Nursing program tending to exhibit higher levels of adjustment. Conversely, no significant differences were observed based on age.

The theoretical implications of these findings affirm the relevance of the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) model within the context of higher education in Indonesia, particularly in the Maumere region. These results contribute to the existing literature on the role of demographic factors in academic adjustment and underscore the importance of



institutional support and needs-based approaches in facilitating the transition of first-year students.

The findings of this study may serve as a foundation for STIKES St. Elisabeth Keuskupan Maumere to develop more targeted orientation programs, academic coaching, and psychosocial support services by taking into account the differing needs of students based on gender and academic program. The implementation of approaches such as mentoring programs, peer-support systems, and training in stress management and study skills can enhance students' academic adjustment during the early transition period of college life.

Recommendations for future research include the need for more in-depth qualitative exploration to understand the psychosocial dynamics involved in the adjustment process of first-year students, as well as the expansion of the sample to include other higher education institutions in Maumere and the broader NTT region. Furthermore, it is necessary to empirically evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs based on these findings to assess their long-term impact. Theoretical implications of this study affirm the relevance of the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) model within the context of higher education in Indonesia, particularly in Maumere. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on the role of demographic factors in academic adjustment and underscore the importance of institutional support and needs-based approaches in facilitating student transitions.

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