

**SOCIAL SUPPORT, ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT, ACADEMIC MOTIVATION,  
UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT, ACADEMIC ASPIRATIONS, MENTOR SCALE,  
EDUCATION GOALS, DECISION TO STUDY, AND SOFT SKILLS: A CASE OF  
RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE STUDENTS OF UiTM**



**RESEARCH MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE (RMI)  
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA  
40450 SHAH ALAM, SELANGOR  
MALAYSIA**

**BY :**

**NASUDDIN OTHMAN  
FAUZIAH NOORDIN  
NORZANA MAT NOR  
AZIDA AZMI  
WAN AHMAD RAHIMAN WAN ABD RAHIM  
AZIZAH YAACOB  
ZAITON ENDOT**

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#### **Research Project Team**

Nasuddin Othman  
Fauziah Noordin  
Norzana Mat Nor  
Azida Azmi  
Wan Ahmad Rahiman Wan Abd Rahim  
Azizah Yaacob

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## 5.2 Enhanced Executive Summary

The objectives of this study are to assess the level of perceived social support appraisal, academic self-concept, academic motivation, perceived university environment, academic mentor scale, students' perception on decision to attend university, educational goals, and soft skills of the students of the residential colleges in UiTM. In addition, it is hoped that the findings of this study would provide practical information for university administrators, college administrators, and students with recommendations for improvement purposes.

Questionnaires were distributed to a total of 3,050 students from various colleges who have agreed to participate in the research project. From the total of 3,050 completed questionnaires, only 2,918 sets of the questionnaires were useable. This gave a response rate of 95.67%.

The findings indicate that family acts as the main social support for the respondents, the respondents have high self-concept with regard to their ability to excel in the studies, the residential colleges students obtained their academic motivation mostly from the family, i.e., primary and secondary, the results noted that more than 50 percent of the respondents' guardian did not graduate from university and/or college, moderate perception on the university environment, residential college students were reported to aim for the highest degree, i.e., Master Degree and also aspired to complete their current degree. This is an indication that the respondents aspire to pursue their education to a higher level than what they are at currently.

The findings also indicate that the respondents regard their friends and family members as mentor as and it appears that they do not have many people in the university whom they regard as their mentors. It appears that respondents understood what their educational goal was and they perceived that their parents supported their career/academic programme and they knew the importance of getting a tertiary education for their future career purposes. Finally, the lowest mean value of 3.17 for the statement "I prefer to be just a follower than a leader" stated in the soft skill section of the questionnaire is a very significant finding and the management the university has to seriously deal with this issue of students preferring to be followers rather than leaders. This is an area where the management of UiTM need to investigate further to determine the reasons or factors that led to these results.

The findings of this study may serve as a needs assessment for the management of the university so that they can work with the residential college administrators to create appropriate intervention programmes and advocate for change in policies that impact the residential college students' university life.

### 5.3 Introduction

The transition to college has been noted by researchers (for e.g., DeBerard, Spielmans & Julka, 2004; Tognoli, 2003; Marcia, 2002). Social support from friends (Skahill, 2002), family (Kimbrough, Molock & Walton, 1998; Schneider and Ward, 2003) as a time of difficulty due to the adjustment, stress and personal changes that a student undergoes. To reduce this 'difficulty,' researchers (for e.g., Lampton (1993); Plecha 2002) mentors can serve as protective and positive factors contributing to a student's personal, and academic aspirations as well as psychological well-being (Rodriguez et al., 2003). Zea, Jarama, & Bianchi (1995) argue that successful adaptation to college was defined as including a student's social integration through the development of social networks, as well as meeting academic requirements and family support has been noted as a protective factor for college students against depression and suicidal ideation (Kimbrough, Molock, & Walton, 1998).

Review of the literature on research in higher education issues indicates that the transition to college (university) as a complex period that includes stress (DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004; Tognoli) and greater opportunities for exercising independence. In addition, this transition period may also provide students with an opportunity for introspection that results in the redefinition of one's identity (Brooks & BuBois, 1995). Brooks and DuBois (1995) investigated predictors of academic and psychological adjustment of first-year students and found that the factors contributing to overall college adjustment included: standardized test scores, problem-solving skills and emotional stability strong predictors, distance from home, daily stress and social support. Tognoli (2003) findings support the idea that students who have a greater distance between their college campus and their parental home face more difficulty with the transition to college because they are less able to access their social networks and familiar environments.

Findings in the literature found that college students' perceptions and personality characteristics influence the relationship between the transition to college and academic factors. Some of these factors include self-efficacy (Coffman & Gilligan, 2002) and self-concept (Cokley, Komarraju, King, Cunningham & Muhammad, 2003; Boulter, 2002; Hamachek, 1995). Skills such as coping strategies and responses to stress (Gloria, Castellanos & Orozco, 2005; Shields, 2001; Struthers, 1995) have also been investigated and found to influence the college transition. A student's perceptions of the campus environment (Belcheir, 2003; Gloria & Ho, 2003; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003; Davis, 1994; Belcheir, 2003) and opportunities for mentorship (Plecha, 2002; Santos & Reigadas, 2000) have also been found to influence a student's college transition.