

ADJUSTMENT OF WOMEN STUDENTS IN AN ARAB COLLEGE (BUC)

RESEARCH REPORT BY:
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This study deals with the adjustment problems of college women in an Arab university (BUC). It tries to examine these problems within the following areas: dating, academic concerns, personal concerns and relations with family and society. The data collected in the study, except for occasional comparisons, were all based on questionnaires, because prior behavioral research on the Arab world is rare. Particularly, the research on behavioral adjustments of young Arab women is scarce.

The sample of respondents is comprised of 262 BUC women students, consisting of two sections: section 1, made up of 104 respondents, was questioned in 1974 on problems of dating and section 2, of 158 respondents, was questioned in 1975 on other aspects of social adjustment.

Respondents of the 1974 sample were selected from the four academic levels of the College: Freshman, Sophomore, Junior and Senior. Nationalities represented were Lebanese, 51%; non-Lebanese Arab, 35%; non-Arab, 14%. The religions represented were Moslem (including Druze), 45%, and Christian, 54%. Most of the respondents were day-students (59%) while 41% were campus boarders.

The 1975 sample was composed of 158 women students, including representatives from all college levels, 58% of whom were boarders, the remaining group living off campus. Ages ranged from 18 to 25 or more. The largest nationality represented was non-Lebanese Arab, 50%; followed by the Lebanese, 25%; and non-Arab, 23%. The Christians represented 53% of the sample and Moslems, 46%.

Procedure of Testing:

Some questionnaires were mailed and some were handed-

out personally. Confidentiality was preserved by having the subjects return unsigned questionnaires in coded envelopes.

Results of Dating Questionnaire: Study I:

On the whole, the respondents showed an open-minded attitude toward dating, considering it a necessary social practice for present and future adjustment. Most of them expected men to ask them for dates and rejected the idea of allowing women to do the asking. 58% of them preferred group-dating while 38% preferred the private form. The majority of them preferred the educated man to the rich or the handsome as a prospective husband. When the women were asked about appropriateness of some pre-marital sexual experience for both men and women, 44% said yes, 49% no.

The majority (54%) said they had no preferences as to the religion of their dates; declared the same attitude toward the nationality of the partner.

Concerning the attitude of their families toward dating, 57% reported family approval. Of this group, 70% belong to Christian families. 64% of the whole group of respondents expressed their independence by saying that they would date someone whom their parents disapproved. As to their family backgrounds, the answers showed that the majority of them belonged to well-to-do families, and had educated, moderately strict parents.

The general adjustment questionnaire revealed the following results:

Concerning the academic section of the questionnaire, the answers showed that 48% of the respondents had chosen a major in social science (history, politics, social work, psychology); 17% in science; 34% in

other liberal arts such as literature, communications, and the fine arts.

Judged by the evidence of daily study sessions, these sample students do not seem to be scholarly and the majority are poorly motivated for academic work outside the classroom. The non-Arab group showed a higher academic standing. 56% of them were on the Dean's list (honor list), while only 18% of the Lebanese and 18% of the other Arab students had their names listed.

Student apathy might be explained by the general trend of undergraduate academic response all over the world, as well as by the fact that 40% of the respondents are engaged in some kind of work for the experience, for money or for supporting themselves.

As to their personal and social life at College, most students reported a fair and happy adjustment. Most were satisfied with limited academic competitiveness, the intimacy of the environment and the relative freedom of living as compared to family life. Many said they missed their family and home friends; on the other hand, they found no difficulty in forming and building friendships at College. 76% indicated that there was a good deal of affection between them and their families and stated that going to college had no effect on their family relations. A minority of 6% felt that college education had a weakening effect on family ties.

Most of them have taken to the modern habit of smoking. To resolve personal problems, the majority resort to friends instead of teachers as a source of counseling. 68% of them attended the cultural events on BUC campus. Most were involved in social activities on campus and outside, but club life, on the whole, was not an important feature for them.