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Social Adjustment among Students of Secondary School and Higher Secondary School in Rural Ahmedabad

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Abstract

Social adjustment is an important part of students' development. It refers to the way students understand social situations, maintain relationships, respond to expectations and manage their behaviour in family, school and community settings. The present paper examines social adjustment among students studying in secondary and higher secondary schools in rural Ahmedabad. The source project included 120 students from two schools: 60 students from a secondary school and 60 from a higher secondary school. Each school group consisted of 30 boys and 30 girls. The study used the Social Adjustment Inventory developed by R. C. Deva and a personal information schedule. The data were analysed through means, standard deviations, standard errors of difference and t-values. The reported results show a statistically significant difference between secondary and higher secondary students, and between boys and girls across the combined school groups. At the secondary level, boys scored higher than girls, while at the higher secondary level the difference between boys and girls was not statistically significant. The study also reports a significant difference between boys of the two school levels and no significant difference between girls of the two levels. These findings are interpreted within the limits of the small, purposively selected sample and the two-school setting. The paper highlights the importance of supportive school environments, counselling, family support and opportunities for healthy peer interaction.

Keywords: social adjustment, secondary school, higher secondary school, rural Ahmedabad, adolescents, gender differences.

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a period of rapid physical, emotional, cognitive and social change. During this stage, students begin to develop a clearer sense of identity, independence and personal responsibility. At the same time, they face new expectations from parents, teachers, friends and the wider community.

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They need to learn how to cooperate with others, manage disagreements, follow social rules and make suitable decisions. These processes are closely connected with social adjustment.

Social adjustment is not a fixed quality. It is a continuing process through which a person responds to personal needs and the demands of the surrounding environment. A student who adjusts well is generally better able to build positive relationships, take part in group activities, respect others' views and deal with everyday challenges. Difficulties in adjustment may be reflected in conflicts, withdrawal, anxiety, poor peer relationships or problems in responding to school expectations.

The school is one of the most important social environments in a young person's life. Students spend a considerable part of their day with classmates and teachers. Their experiences at school may influence confidence, communication, cooperation and their ability to manage differences. Family conditions and the local social environment also contribute to adjustment. For this reason, studying students' social adjustment can help teachers, parents and counsellors understand their needs and provide suitable support.

The present paper is based on the project titled "A Study on Social Adjustment Among Students of Secondary School and Higher Secondary School in Rural Ahmedabad" prepared by Dipal Parmar in 2022. The study compares students at two school levels and examines differences in relation to gender.

2. Objectives of the Study

• To study the social adjustment of students studying in secondary and higher secondary schools.
• To examine social adjustment in relation to gender (boys and girls) across the two school levels.
• To compare the social adjustment of boys and girls studying at the secondary school level.
• To compare the social adjustment of boys and girls studying at the higher secondary school level.
• To compare boys studying at secondary and higher secondary levels.
• To compare girls studying at secondary and higher secondary levels.

3. Hypotheses

The source project stated the following null hypotheses:

• There would be no significant difference in social adjustment between students of secondary and higher secondary schools.

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• There would be no significant difference in social adjustment between boys and girls across the two school levels.

• There would be no significant difference in social adjustment between boys and girls studying in secondary school.

• There would be no significant difference in social adjustment between boys and girls studying in higher secondary school.

• There would be no significant difference in social adjustment between boys studying in secondary and higher secondary schools.

• There would be no significant difference in social adjustment between girls studying in secondary and higher secondary schools.

4. Research Methodology

The project used a comparative survey approach. It examined social adjustment scores of students belonging to two educational levels and compared the scores by gender. The independent variables were school level and gender. The dependent variable was the score obtained on the Social Adjustment Inventory.

The study was conducted in the rural area of Ahmedabad. The sample consisted of 120 students selected from two schools. Sixty students were taken from a secondary school and sixty from a higher secondary school. Each group included 30 boys and 30 girls. The project specifies that the students were from Standard 10 at the secondary level and Standard 11 at the higher secondary level, and that the study was limited to the 2020–2021 student group.

School level	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**
Secondary school	30	30	60
Higher secondary school	30	30	60
Total	**60**	**60**	**120**

Two tools were used: (1) a personal information schedule containing details such as students' name, age, gender, standard, occupation and family income; and (2) the Social Adjustment Inventory prepared by Dr. R. C. Deva and published by the National Psychological Corporation, Agra, in 2004. The inventory contained approximately 100 items with "Yes" and "No" response options. Students

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were asked to respond honestly. The project notes that completion generally required about 20–25 minutes.

The researcher first visited the selected schools and obtained permission from the school authorities. The purpose of the study was explained to the students, and instructions were given on how to complete the inventory. Responses were collected from the students and used for the statistical analysis.

The source project used the mean, standard deviation, standard error of difference (SED) and t-test to compare the groups. The reported significance levels were .05 and .01. The interpretation below follows the values and conclusions printed in the source project.

5. Results and Interpretation

The following tables reproduce the principal group statistics reported in Chapter 4 of the source project. The mean scores and t-values are presented as printed. The source document sometimes uses "significant" and "not significant" labels in its accompanying interpretation; those conclusions are retained while noting a few internal inconsistencies where relevant.

Table 1. Comparison of Secondary and Higher Secondary Students

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Decision
Secondary school	60	107.91	31.80	2.33	Significant at .05
Higher secondary school	60	95.51	28.47		

The mean social adjustment score was 107.91 for secondary school students and 95.51 for higher secondary school students. The reported t-value was 2.33, which exceeded the .05 critical value stated in the project. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no difference was rejected. In this sample, secondary school students had a higher mean social adjustment score than higher secondary school students.

Table 2. Boys and Girls Across Both School Levels

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Decision
Boys	60	108.66	31.17	2.63	Significant at .01
Girls	60	93.76	30.74		

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The mean score for boys was 108.66, compared with 93.76 for girls. The reported t-value was 2.63 and was treated as significant at the .01 level in the source project. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The result indicates a difference in the scores of boys and girls in the selected sample. It should not be interpreted as evidence that one gender is naturally or universally better adjusted; social opportunities, expectations and other contextual factors may also be relevant.

Table 3. Boys and Girls at the Secondary School Level

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Decision
Secondary boys	30	115.53	27.51	2.54	Significant at .05
Secondary girls	30	96.33	30.94		

At the secondary level, boys had a mean score of 115.53 and girls had a mean score of 96.33. The reported t-value was 2.54 and the source project considered the difference significant at the .05 level. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected for this comparison.

Table 4. Boys and Girls at the Higher Secondary School Level

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Decision
Higher secondary boys	30	97.83	28.11	1.23	Not significant
Higher secondary girls	30	89.23	26.13		

At the higher secondary level, the mean score was 97.83 for boys and 89.23 for girls. The t-value was 1.23, which was below the critical value used in the project. The difference was therefore not statistically significant, and the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 5. Boys at Secondary and Higher Secondary Levels

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Decision
Secondary boys	30	115.43	27.51	2.47	Significant at .05
Higher secondary boys	30	97.83	28.11		

The reported mean score for secondary school boys was 115.43, while the mean for higher secondary school boys was 97.83. The t-value was 2.47 and was treated as significant at the .05 level. The source project therefore rejected the null hypothesis for this comparison.

Table 6. Girls at Secondary and Higher Secondary Levels

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Decision

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Secondary girls	30	96.33	30.94	0.96	Not significant
Higher secondary girls	30	89.23	26.13		

The mean score for secondary school girls was 96.33 and for higher secondary school girls it was 89.23. The reported t-value was 0.96, which was not statistically significant. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted for this comparison.

6. Discussion

The results suggest that social adjustment scores differed between the two school levels in the selected sample. Secondary school students recorded a higher mean score than higher secondary school students. The project suggests that students at the secondary level may receive more direction and support from parents, whereas higher secondary students may face greater expectations of independence. This is one possible explanation offered by the source; the study did not directly test parental involvement or independence as explanatory variables.

The comparison between boys and girls across both school levels showed a significant difference, with boys obtaining a higher mean score. A similar difference was reported among secondary school students. However, at the higher secondary level, the difference between boys and girls was not statistically significant. These mixed results indicate that gender differences may vary across educational stages and should not be treated as universal.

The comparison between boys at the two school levels was statistically significant, while the comparison between girls was not. The project proposes that changing educational expectations, family awareness and students' growing independence may influence adjustment. However, the study had a limited sample and did not measure these possible factors directly. Further research with a larger sample and more detailed background information is needed.

Social adjustment is influenced by several connected conditions, including family relationships, peer acceptance, school climate, teacher support, economic circumstances and opportunities for participation. Therefore, a single score cannot fully explain a student's social experience. The findings are best understood as a description of the selected students rather than a general statement about all rural adolescents.

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7. Major Findings

• A significant difference was reported between secondary and higher secondary school students; the secondary group had the higher mean score.

• A significant difference was reported between boys and girls when the two school levels were considered together; boys had the higher mean score.

• At the secondary level, boys scored higher than girls, and the difference was reported as significant.

• At the higher secondary level, the difference between boys and girls was not statistically significant.

• A significant difference was reported between boys studying at the two school levels; secondary school boys had the higher mean score.

• No significant difference was reported between girls studying at the two school levels.

8. Conclusion

Social adjustment is an important part of healthy adolescent development. It helps students develop positive relationships, respond to social expectations and participate constructively in school and community life. The present study, based on 120 students from two schools in rural Ahmedabad, found differences in social adjustment scores between school levels and in some gender-based comparisons. However, not all comparisons showed significant differences.

The findings underline the need to understand students in their individual and social contexts. Schools and families can support adjustment by providing encouragement, equal opportunities, guidance and a respectful environment. Since the study was limited to a small sample from two schools, further research with a larger and more diverse group of students is recommended.

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