

## Adjustment Among Senior Secondary School Students Considering Their Gender: A Comparative Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

Adjustment is a crucial psychological process for humans and in the adolescent period it becomes even more tedious. Adjustment is a mechanism by which individuals circumstantially balance their needs with the environment. The gender effects during adolescence enable the researchers to understand the adjustment problems and help them to suggest remedial measures accordingly. Present study intends to extend a comparison of adjustment level of male and female adolescents studying in Government and private schools of Himachal Pradesh. The study conducted on a sample of 1200 adolescents randomly selected from government and private schools of four districts (Mandi, Shimla, Kangra, Sirmour) of the state of Himachal Pradesh. The selected students belonged to the age group of 12-18 years. A standardized questionnaire (Adjustment Inventory) developed by Prof. A.K.P. Sinha and Prof. R.P. Singh (2019) was adopted for the study. The collected data were analyzed statistically using the mean, standard deviation, t-test, and Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient. The findings of the study revealed that there is significant difference in adjustment of adolescents with respect to gender (male and female), as male adolescents found more adjusted in comparison to female adolescents. The findings of the investigation may help in developing skill training programs to mitigate adjustment problems.

**Keywords:** *Adjustment, Adolescents, Gender, Skills*

Education is a composite process of bringing out mental and behavioral changes in an individual. It plays an important role as it nurtures, change, adaptation and helps individuals to create adjustable personality. Each and every state of life demands that the individual should be able to perform efficiently in different situations and should be able to form balance between various forces. Education helps everyone to keep believe in their own abilities and to attain desired goals. The concept of adjustment has existed long before humans appeared on Earth. A person not only adapts to social expectations but also to physical conditions. Adjustment, derived from the Latin term *ad-justare*, refers to how a person accomplishes internal conflicts, unmet desires, and disappointment while balancing internal desires with external demands. It is the process of finding equilibrium between one's needs and the constraints of the environment. According to Shaffer, adjustment is the process by which a living being establishes a balance between its needs and the environment that affect how those needs are met (Shaffer, 1961). Adjustment is a behavioral process in

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which individuals or species strive to find a balance between their desires, needs, and the challenges presented by their environment. This involves adapting to various circumstances and maintaining harmony between the person and their surroundings. In this sense, adjustment can also be defined as the process of achieving a balance between one's physical, social, and psychological needs and the external factors that influence how well those needs are fulfilled. Psychologically, adjustment helps the individual to handle the demands and pressures of the outer world as well as the needs, desires and conflicts experiencing within. Therefore, adjustment helps in intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and vocational development of individual. Improper adjustment not only affects the normal growth of adolescents but also lay impact on their academic growth. It is well-known fact that adjustment to school and educational achievement of the child is immensely influenced by a variety of personal, family characteristics and social trends. Adjustment is the product of the individual's effort to deal with the stress and meet his needs, also his efforts to maintain harmonious relationship with his surroundings.

There are several important aspects of life, with some being more central, like home, health, social, emotional, and educational areas. How a person adapts in these areas significantly influences their personality, as it reflects the type of adjustments they make. As a result, it is essential to understand these various forms of adjustment.

**Social Adjustment:** Adolescents are gaining more independence and developing their own social circles. They encounter the challenge of connecting with peers, making friendships, and defining their social identity. Factors like peer pressure, the need to fit in, and the desire for approval can impact their social adjustments. As they explore different roles and behaviors to find their place, this process can occasionally result in conflicts with family or authority figures.

**Emotional Adjustment:** The emotional changes that adolescents go through can be overwhelming and difficult to navigate. As they grow, they may face mood swings, self-doubt, and increased emotional sensitivity. Adolescents are in the process of learning how to handle these emotions, build emotional resilience, and cope with challenges like relationships, academic stress, and self-identity. Emotional adjustment involves developing self-awareness, boosting self-esteem, and discovering healthy ways to express and manage their feelings.

**Educational Adjustment:** As adolescents progress through their education, they encounter rising demands in terms of workload, responsibility, and future planning. They must adjust to the growing complexity of their studies, make decisions about their future educational or career choices, and find a balance between academics and extracurricular activities. How they adapt to school life—managing academic stress, developing time management abilities, and handling expectations—can have a major impact on both their academic performance and overall well-being.

**Health Adjustment:** Adolescents experience notable physical transformations during puberty, which can affect their body image and self-esteem. Along with these changes, the need to adopt healthier habits, such as regular exercise, proper nutrition, and adequate sleep, can make adjusting to these shifts challenging. Mental health issues, like anxiety and depression, are also prevalent during this stage, making it important for them to learn coping

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strategies and seek support when necessary. Navigating these physical and mental changes is essential for their overall growth and development.

**Home or Family Adjustment:** During adolescence, young people often undergo changes in their relationships with family members as they strive for greater independence. They may want more freedom, which can create tension with parents or guardians. Navigating the balance between seeking autonomy and meeting family expectations can lead to conflict. Additionally, adolescents may need to adjust to shifts in family dynamics, particularly during significant life events like a divorce or the arrival of a new sibling.

**Career or Future Adjustment:** As adolescents begin contemplating their futures, they may feel pressured to choose career paths, higher education options, and other long-term goals. This planning process can create feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, as they might not yet have a clear vision of what they want or how to get there. Making decisions about their future and finding a sense of direction is a crucial part of their adjustment, as they start to define their roles in society and shape their future identities.

Adolescence is a time of significant change and growth, where young people face numerous challenges in adjusting to the complexities of life. These adjustments are important because they shape the adolescent's identity and influence their ability to cope with the demands of adulthood. How adolescents navigate these adjustments can have a lasting impact on their emotional well-being, social relationships, academic success, and overall development.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Adolescence is a period of profound transformation, where individuals experience rapid physical, emotional, and cognitive changes. As they transition from childhood to adulthood, adolescents face various challenges and must adjust to multiple aspects of their lives. This review examines existing literature on adolescent adjustment, exploring key areas such as social, emotional, academic, and health adjustments, and the factors that influence successful adaptation during this critical phase of life.

**Erikson (1968)**, the central task of adolescence is the establishment of an identity, which is heavily influenced by social interactions. Adolescents begin to form deeper peer relationships, develop social skills, and explore romantic relationships.

**Brown and Larson (2002)** argue that the peer group becomes central during this phase, influencing behavior, values, and identity development. Peer acceptance and social belonging are linked to self-esteem and emotional well-being.

**Steinberg (2008)** discusses how peer influence may lead to risky behaviors, such as substance use or early sexual activity, when adolescents prioritize fitting in over their own values.

**Wentzel (1998)** highlights that adolescents who feel accepted by peers tend to show more positive social and academic behaviors.

**Roy, Ekka, and Ara (2011)** conducted a study on Adjustment among university students and it was found that female students were better adjusted across all areas of adjustment compared to male students.

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**Lama (2010)** noted that female students tend to experience more adjustment difficulties than their male counterparts. This suggests that male students are generally better adjusted overall on campus than female students.

**Rahmatullah (2007)** also pointed out that boys are notably better adjusted than girls in terms of emotional adjustment.

**Amato (2001)**, supportive family relationships are linked to better social and emotional adjustment. Conversely, adolescents from conflict-ridden or divorced families may experience higher levels of stress, which can impair their adjustment.

**Bronfenbrenner (1979)** proposed that an individual's development is influenced by multiple layers of the environment, including family, peers, school, and societal norms. These influences interact and can either promote or hinder an adolescent's ability to adjust.

**Schwartz et al. (2011)** argue that cultural differences also play a role in how adolescents adjust to social and educational expectations, suggesting that cultural values can impact adolescents' coping strategies and stress responses.

**Kaur R. (2022)** conducted a study on Gender Difference in Social adjustment and Interpersonal support among college going students to examine the gender difference and connection between social adjustment and interpersonal support between students of Punjab University. The finding showed, male adolescents found more adjusted w.r.t female.

**Bhardwaj, S. & Sharma, U. (2021)** conducted a comparative study among college students to compare the social intelligence, emotional intelligence and adjustment with respect to their gender. The results concluded no considerable difference in overall adjustment with respect to gender.

**B.L. Hoovinbhavi (2021)** conducted a comparative study on the adjustment abilities of adolescents with respect to certain variables. The sample included 120 students, 60 male and 60 female. The study, which employed a survey method, used an adjustment scale developed by Sinha and Singh for data collection. The analysis, using a t-test, revealed that adolescents generally had an average level of adjustment. Additionally, the study found significant differences in the emotional and social adjustment abilities between males and females.

**Harter (1999)** highlights that emotional changes during adolescence, driven by hormonal shifts, cognitive development, and social expectations, often lead to a struggle for emotional independence. Adolescents must navigate feelings of confusion, insecurity, and the pressures of identity formation. This can result in vulnerability to mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression.

**Compas (2009)** suggests that adolescents often use maladaptive coping strategies (e.g., avoidance or aggression) when faced with stress. However, *Zimmerman and Schmeichel (2007)* emphasize that successful emotional adjustment can occur when adolescents develop healthy coping mechanisms, such as seeking support from peers or family and learning emotional regulation skills.

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**Kaur, J. and Gupta, P. (2021)** carried out a study on adolescents to assess the relationship between adjustment and intelligence in relation to gender and locality. The results showed no significant difference in adjustment levels between boys and girls based on locality.

**Vyas, S. (2021)** conducted a study to analyze the adjustment levels of adolescents. The sample comprised 100 adolescents, and the findings indicated that adolescents from both government and private schools in rural and urban areas showed notable differences in their adjustment abilities, with female adolescents being better adjusted than male adolescents.

**Janardhanan, V. (2020)** explored adjustment among college students. The study sample consisted of 60 students from various colleges, and data were analyzed using mean, t-test, and standard deviation. The results indicated that male students had lower adjustment levels compared to female students.

**Petersen (1988)** describes how body image issues, related to puberty, can greatly impact adolescents' emotional well-being. Adolescents often struggle with issues related to self-esteem, influenced by societal standards of beauty and attractiveness. These body image concerns can contribute to mental health issues, such as eating disorders or low self-confidence.

**Spear (2002)** indicates that adolescents are more susceptible to risky behaviors, such as smoking, alcohol consumption, and poor diet choices, which can affect their physical health.

**Lytle et al. (2004)** stress the importance of health education and peer-led interventions to promote healthy lifestyle choices during this time.

**Babasaheb, R. (2019)** examined the adjustment of college-going students, comparing differences in home, social, emotional, and health adjustments based on gender. The sample of 100 students, 50 male and 50 female, from rural and urban areas was assessed using Bell's adjustment scale by Lalit Sharma. The study found that female adolescents had higher levels of adjustment in all areas—home, social, emotional, and health—compared to their male counterparts.

**Barik, A. (2019)** conducted a study to measure the adjustment abilities of adolescents in Purba Bardhaman district, West Bengal, with respect to their locality. The study concluded that female adolescents demonstrated better adjustment abilities than male adolescents, and that adolescents from rural areas had better adjustment skills than those from urban areas.

**Bimla (2019)** conducted a comparative study among college students to assess their level of adjustment in relation to gender, locality, and academic stream. The analysis, which utilized mean, standard deviation, and t-test, revealed that students from rural areas exhibited better home, social, and emotional adjustments compared to their urban counterparts, while urban students showed better educational adjustment.

**Eccles et al. (1993)**, academic self-concept, motivation, and achievement goals are closely tied to how well adolescents adjust to the school environment. Adolescents face increasing academic demands, such as preparing for exams, managing schoolwork, and making long-term decisions about their educational paths.

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**Gottfried (2013)** points out that effective academic adjustment requires not only cognitive abilities but also the development of time management skills, the ability to set goals, and a positive relationship with educators.

**Wang et al. (1997)** discussed that Poor academic adjustment can lead to disengagement, school absenteeism, or academic failure.

**Furman and Buhrmester (1985)** argue that a strong sense of belonging to the school community, along with support from teachers and peers, helps adolescents adjust positively to the academic demands.

**Kour, J. (2019)** studied the impact of home environment on adolescents' adjustment, with a sample of 200 students from various government-aided schools in urban and rural areas of Sangrur District, Punjab. The findings indicated no significant difference in adjustment levels between boys and girls.

**Mathew, M. (2019)** conducted a study to assess emotional, social, and educational adjustment among male and female adolescents. The study revealed that male adolescents exhibited higher emotional adjustment than female adolescents, while female adolescents demonstrated better social adjustment compared to their male peers.

**Azpiazu, L., Antonio-Aguirre, I., Izar-de-la-Funte, I. et al. (2024)** analyzed and compare two theoretical models to determine the prediction of teacher and peer support, resilience and positive affect to school adjustment, measured through emotional engagement, school integration problems and perceived academic performance.

**Xiaoqian Wu, Jingru Xie, Yiji Wang (2024)** examined the longitudinal relations between adjustment problems and school bullying in middle childhood by differentiating between- and within-person effects and putting the co-occurrence into consideration.

### *Need and Significance of the Study*

The study of adolescent adjustment is crucial due to the unique challenges and changes that occur during this developmental phase. Adolescence is a time when individuals undergo significant physical, emotional, social, and cognitive transformations. Understanding the ways in which adolescents adjust to these changes has profound implications for their well-being, academic success, and overall development.

The study of adolescent adjustment through a gender comparison is vibrant for evolving adapted involvements, enhancing mental health support, and understanding the broader societal and cultural factors that influence adolescent development. By identifying how gender influences various aspects of adjustment, society can create more inclusive and supportive environments that help adolescents navigate the complexities of growing up. This research is not only significant in promoting individual well-being but also essential for fostering gender equity and improving educational and healthcare outcomes for all young people.

Adolescence is a pivotal period in human development, where individuals transition from childhood to adulthood. During this time, adolescents experience rapid growth, hormonal changes, and increased independence. Their ability to adjust to various physical, emotional,

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social, and academic demands can have lasting effects on their identity formation and future life outcomes. Studying adolescent adjustment helps identify the factors that either promote or hinder healthy development during this crucial stage.

Adolescents face a host of social and emotional challenges, such as peer pressure, identity exploration, and emotional instability. Poor adjustment in these areas can lead to mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and social isolation. A study of adolescent adjustment helps in identifying the factors that influence emotional well-being, enabling the development of interventions aimed at supporting positive mental health and coping strategies during this stage. Educational adjustment plays a significant role in determining the academic success of adolescents. Those who struggle to adjust to the demands of school, manage academic pressure, or navigate social relationships within the school setting may face difficulties in their academic performance and future career prospects. By studying how adolescents adapt to academic environments, educators and policymakers can design better support systems that promote academic motivation, engagement, and success. Adolescence is a time when individuals are more susceptible to engaging in risky behaviors, such as substance use, early sexual activity, and unhealthy lifestyle choices. These behaviors can be influenced by an adolescent's ability to adjust to their environment and handle stressors. Studying adolescent adjustment helps to identify early warning signs and risk factors that contribute to the development of such behaviors, allowing for the creation of preventive measures and intervention programs. Adolescents undergo significant changes in their relationships with family and peers. As they seek independence, they may experience conflicts with parents or caregivers. Peer relationships also evolve, with adolescents navigating friendships, romantic relationships, and group dynamics. Studying how adolescents adjust in these contexts can provide valuable information on how to strengthen family bonds, improve parent-adolescent communication, and support healthy peer relationships. The adjustments adolescents make during this stage have a lasting impact on their adult lives. Successful adjustment in adolescence can lead to better mental health, career success, and strong interpersonal relationships in adulthood. On the other hand, failure to adjust can contribute to long-term challenges, such as chronic stress, difficulty in forming relationships, or underachievement. Research on adolescent adjustment provides insights into the long-term outcomes of this period and helps in the development of interventions that can have a positive impact on individuals throughout their life course. Adolescent adjustment is not only influenced by personal characteristics but also by cultural, societal, and environmental factors. Studying adolescent adjustment in diverse contexts helps highlight how different factors, such as socioeconomic status, cultural norms, and social policies, affect an adolescent's ability to navigate this phase of life. This understanding can inform culturally relevant interventions and policies that cater to the needs of adolescents from various backgrounds. In sum, studying adolescent adjustment is essential for promoting the overall well-being of adolescents and supporting their successful transition to adulthood.

### ***Objectives of the study***

To study the adjustment of adolescents w.r.t their gender.

### ***Hypotheses of the study***

There will be no significant difference in adjustment of adolescents in relation to their gender.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study applied survey methods due to its descriptive nature. This unit contained sample, research tool and process of the data collection.

### *Sample*

The present study was carried out on adolescents four districts of Himachal Pradesh. The sample of 1200 students were randomly selected from government and private schools located districts Mandi, Shimla, Sirmour, Kangra. The ages of the students ranged from 12 to 18 years.

### *Procedure of data collection*

The investigator manages to gather data personally with permission of the school's authorities. The investigator used Adjustment Inventory developed by Prof. A.K.P. Sinha and Prof. R.P. Singh (2019) for data collection accomplished by subsequent instructions given by the author. After completion of data collection, scoring of adjustment inventory was done by using scoring key of inventory. For data analysis t-test was used. Hypothesis was tested over 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance.

### *Analysis and Interpretation of the Data*

Descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviations) were computed, and the inferential statistics ("t" test) was employed to compare the means of the students across said variable. The first objective of the study was to explore the difference in Adjustment among adolescents with respect to gender. To achieve this objective, information regarding adjustment was collected from male and female students. It was hypothesized that there is no significant difference in the adjustment of adolescents with respect to gender. To verify this hypothesis, adjustment scores of the students were calculated and t-test was employed to analyze the difference. The results so obtained have been presented in Table 1.

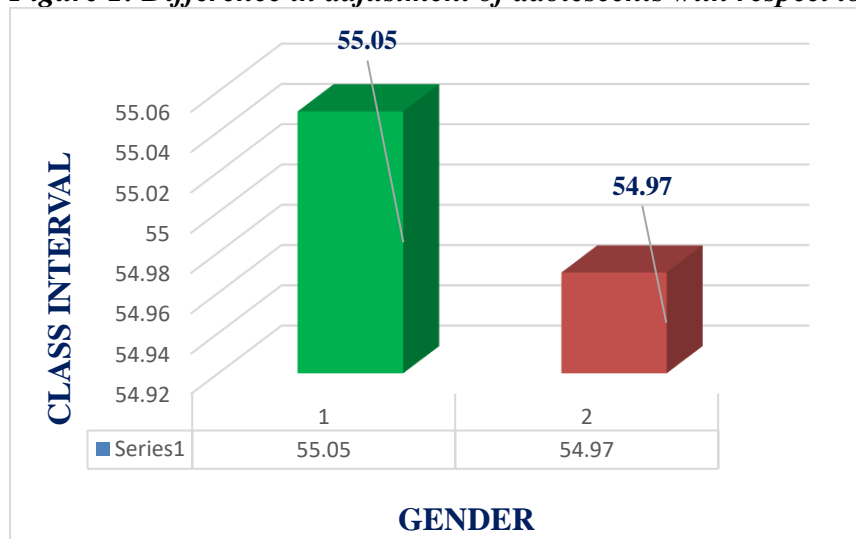
**Table1: 't' Value Showing Significance of Difference in Mean Scores of 'Adjustments' of adolescents in relation to gender**

Sr. No.	Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value
1.	Male	600	55.05	10.680	0.138
2.	Female	600	54.97	10.211	

Table 1 reveals that mean and standard deviation (SD) of adjustment scores of the male students are 55.05 and 10.680 respectively, whereas the mean and standard deviation (SD) of the adjustment scores of the female students are 54.97 and 10.211 respectively. The calculated t-value turned out to be 0.138 and it is not significant at 0.05 level. This reveals that there exists no significant difference between the male and female students on the variable of adjustment. As the mean scores of male students on the variable of adjustment were found to be higher than the female students, it may be further concluded that the male adolescents studying in senior secondary school are better adjusted than their female counterpart.

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Figure 1: Difference in adjustment of adolescents with respect to gender



### CONCLUSION AND APPLICATION

The comparative study of the adjustment of adolescents at the senior secondary level highlighted, how difficult and important it is to understand the challenges face by every individual during adolescence and these are not similar on gender basis. All the stack holders including, educators, parents, and policymakers should work collaboratively to create an environment that encourage impartial opportunities, encounter stereotypes, and support the various needs of all students, especially girls Although, significant difference is not found in adjustment of adolescents in relation to their gender, but male adolescents found more adjusted than their female counterpart.

Adjustment is crucial as it enables individuals to develop coping behaviors in response to various situations. Therefore, school authorities and parents should focus on reducing the adjustment challenges faced by their wards, specially for girls. Targeted intervention programs can be designed to support students who struggle with coping with the demands and pressures that may lead to stress and tension in their school life. Providing general information on academic, social, and cultural issues within the school environment can help smooth the transition for students. Additionally, the school administration should also organize health awareness programs and ensure students are aware of available resources and services so they can easily access the support they need.

#### Limitations:

The present study had its own limitations, some of which are as follows:

- The study was confined to only four districts of Himachal Pradesh.
- The study was confined to only school students.

#### Suggestions:

Some suggestions for future research are as follows:

- More students must be included to increase sample size.
- The area of investigation can be expanded to more districts for broader generalization.
- Analogous studies can be employed on college students, so that effect of age, educational qualification can be compared among pre and post adolescent's period.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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