

Research Paper

Adjustment of Secondary School Students in Relation to School Environment

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ABSTRACT

The research was conducted to examine students' adjustment at the secondary level in relation to their school surroundings. A total of 100 learners from two Government schools in Chandigarh constituted the sample. Simple random and purposive sampling methods were adopted. Information was gathered through the Adjustment Inventory for School Students developed by Sinha and Singh (1984) and the School Environment Inventory developed by Mishra (2012). The data was collected by using descriptive measures like mean and standard deviation. Further statistical analysis was carried out using the t-ratio and correlation coefficient. The findings indicated a statistically meaningful variation in adjustment between adolescent boys and girls. Boys demonstrated better adjustment than girls. In contrast, the two groups did not show a statistically meaningful difference in their perception of the school setting. Nevertheless, boys perceived their school surroundings more positively than girls. The findings also indicated a statistically meaningful association between students' adjustment and the school environment.

Keywords: *Adjustment, Secondary School Students and School Environment*

Education is a lifelong journey that helps individuals grow, understand the world and become responsible and active members of society. Its scope extends beyond formal instruction and classroom learning to include the experiences, interactions and social contexts through which individuals continually learn and develop. Education contributes to the intellectual, social, emotional, and moral development of individuals and plays an important role in preparing them to assume responsible roles within society. It broadens individuals' perspectives, develops awareness of social and cultural values, and promotes understanding, tolerance, and responsible citizenship. In this sense, education extends beyond academic attainment and contributes substantially to the overall development and adjustment of individuals within their social environment.

Adjustment is an important dimension of human development and refers broadly to the process through which individuals respond to, adapt to, and interact with the demands of their environment. Although the concept of adjustment was initially associated primarily with biological adaptation to environmental conditions, psychological perspectives

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subsequently extended its meaning to include adaptation to changing social, emotional, and interpersonal circumstances. Adjustment may modify their behavior, attitudes, and responses in accordance with the demands of a particular situation while simultaneously attempting to satisfy their personal needs.

In the context of education, student adjustment involves maintaining an appropriate balance between the individual needs, learning and society atmosphere. Students encounter a range of academic, intellectual, emotional, interpersonal, and social demands during their educational journey. Effective adjustment occurs when students are able to respond constructively to these demands and achieve an appropriate degree of harmony between their needs and the conditions surrounding them. The adjustment process is influenced by previous experiences, individual characteristics, expectations, coping responses, and environmental circumstances. This process becomes particularly significant during adolescence, a developmental period characterized by substantial physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes. The quality of adjustment achieved during adolescence may have important implications for subsequent personality development and adult functioning.

Adjustment is not a static state but a continuous interaction between the individual and the environment. It involves both adaptation to existing circumstances and attempts to modify environmental conditions in accordance with legitimate individual needs. Individuals differ considerably in the ways they respond to similar situations. While some students may persist in overcoming difficulties through repeated attempts and adaptive coping strategies, others may withdraw when confronted with barriers, resulting in frustration, conflict, or maladjustment. Consequently, successful adjustment depends not only on individual characteristics but also on the nature and quality of the environment in which individuals live and learn. Well-adjusted individuals are generally characterized by realistic aspirations, flexibility in behaviour, healthy attitudes and habits, satisfactory interpersonal relationships, and an ability to respond constructively to environmental demands.

Within the educational context, the school environment represents an important external factor that can influence students' experiences, development, and adjustment. The quality of education depends not only upon instructional practices and teacher performance but also upon the broader environment in which teaching and learning occur. The terms *school environment* and *school climate* are often used to describe the physical, social, psychological, and organizational characteristics of a school. These characteristics include the availability of learning facilities, classroom conditions, school rules and disciplinary practices, teacher-student relationships, peer interactions, safety, institutional support, and the general atmosphere experienced by students.

A supportive school environment can provide students with conditions that facilitate learning, participation, social interaction, and psychological well-being. Conversely, an unfavourable environment may create barriers to effective learning and adjustment. The school environment encompasses both tangible and intangible resources, including teachers, peers, instructional practices, learning materials, physical facilities, interpersonal relationships, and the degree of cohesiveness within the school community. A positive and stimulating school environment can enhance students' sense of belonging, encourage their participation in school activities, and contribute to their interest in learning and remaining engaged with the educational process (Mgbodile, 2014).

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The significance of the learning environment has also been emphasized in educational research. Belanger (2006) suggested that individuals' educational experiences are shaped not only by their personal characteristics but also by the environments in which they live and learn. Similarly, Nwizu (2013) highlighted the impact of academic atmosphere on learners' cognitive achievement. These perspectives indicate that the quality of learning cannot be understood exclusively in terms of individual abilities or instructional processes; rather, environmental and organizational conditions also play an important role. A supportive school environment, characterized by adequate learning facilities, positive interpersonal relationships, and a favourable institutional climate, may enable students to feel more comfortable, attentive, and engaged in academic activities.

The concept of the learning environment extends beyond its physical dimensions. Faulkner et al. (2005) described learning environments in terms of both physical and non-physical dimensions, including social, psychosocial, and cultural elements. Thus, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, recreational facilities, and other physical resources constitute only one aspect of the school environment. Equally important are social interactions, interpersonal relationships, institutional practices, and the psychological climate experienced by students. The interaction among students, teachers, administrators, and other members of the school community therefore forms an important component of the educational environment.

Hains et al. (2008) further conceptualized the learning environment as encompassing a broad range of psychological, pedagogical, and cultural variables. From this perspective, the school environment represents an integration of multiple school-level factors that shape students' learning experiences. It includes the psychosocial climate perceived by students and reflects the extent to which they receive cognitive, emotional, and social support during their school years. A well-organized and supportive school environment can provide conditions conducive to students' harmonious development by facilitating positive teacher-student relationships, constructive peer interactions, emotional support, and meaningful engagement in learning.

The school environment is particularly important during adolescence because the school constitutes one of the major socialization contexts in which young people interact with teachers and peers and develop academic, social, and interpersonal competencies. Research over several decades has indicated that students' experiences within school can influence not only academic outcomes and school participation but also broader patterns of social and behavioural development. Students' perceptions of their school environment may therefore provide important insights into the quality of their educational experiences and their ability to adjust effectively to school-related demands.

Mege (2014) emphasized that the school environment encompasses various components, including classrooms, libraries, technical facilities, teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, and instructional practices. Accordingly, the school environment should be viewed as a multidimensional construct arising from the interaction of physical facilities, educational practices, interpersonal relationships, and psychosocial conditions. These dimensions collectively shape the context in which students learn, interact, develop, and adjust.

Thus, student adjustment and school environment are closely interconnected dimensions of the educational experience. Understanding the conditions that facilitate or hinder students' adjustment is particularly important for creating educational environments that support their

academic, emotional, social, and psychological development. Examining the relationship between school environment and student adjustment can consequently provide useful evidence for teachers, school administrators, educational planners, and policymakers seeking to develop supportive and inclusive educational settings.

Need and Significance of the Study

Students encounter a range of adjustment demands throughout their school years as they adapt to changes in teachers, classrooms, peers, school and classroom rules, procedures, academic expectations, and the increasing complexity of their studies. The ability to negotiate these changing academic and social demands effectively is an important aspect of successful school adjustment and may influence students' academic and psychosocial development. At the same time, students gradually develop greater self-reliance and independence, along with an increasing sense of responsibility for their learning, behaviour, relationships, and decision-making. These developmental changes make adjustment an important aspect of students' educational experiences. Secondary school students' adjustment is an important concern for educationists and professionals involved in student well-being. School adjustment is a multidimensional construct that includes academic achievement, school satisfaction, engagement in learning, interpersonal relationships, and prosocial behaviour. Well-adjusted students tend to participate actively in school activities, demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning, and achieve better academically. In contrast, difficulties in school adjustment may be associated with poor academic performance, behavioural problems, reduced educational aspirations, disengagement from school, and school dropout. Understanding and promoting effective school adjustment is therefore essential for supporting students' academic, social, and emotional development. Rapid technological advancement and the expansion of knowledge have significantly transformed individuals' lifestyles and social environments. These changes can create new demands, pressures, and challenges that require individuals to adapt continuously to changing circumstances. Adjustment is the process through which individuals respond to stress, tensions, conflicts, and environmental demands while attempting to fulfil their needs. It involves modifying one's behaviour, attitudes, and responses to achieve a satisfactory balance between personal needs and environmental expectations. Effective adjustment therefore enables individuals to maintain harmonious relationships with their surroundings and respond constructively to the demands of everyday life. The research aims to examine the adjustment of secondary school students and the association between their adjustment and school environment. The findings may help teachers to understand students' behavior better and provide suitable guidance to support their well-being. It helps them lead a happy and satisfying life.

Objectives

The following objectives are:

1. To examine the adjustment of males and females of secondary school students.
2. To examine the school environment of males and females secondary school students.
3. To explore the correlation between adjustment and school environment of secondary school males.
4. To study the correlation between adjustment and school environment of secondary school females.
5. To study the correlation overall adjustment and school environment of total sample.

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Hypotheses

- H₁: There exists no statistically meaningful variation in the adjustment among males and females of secondary school students.
- H₂: There exists no statistically meaningful variation in the school environment among males and females of secondary school students.
- H₃: There exists no statistically meaningful correlation among adjustment and school environment of males of secondary school students.
- H₄: There exists no statistically meaningful correlation among adjustment and school environment of females of secondary school students.
- H₅: There exists statistically meaningful correlation between adjustment and school environment of total sample.

Sample

The present study consists of 100 students of 9th class of two government schools of Chandigarh. The random sample technique was used and 50 males and 50 females were included from each school.

Design

The investigation was employed on a 100 students of secondary school from Chandigarh. The study included two main variables: adjustment and school environment. Adjustment was considered the dependent variable, while school environment was treated as the independent variable. The descriptive survey method was used to examine the adjustment and school environment.

Tools Used

The required information was gathered using the following tools

1. Adjustment Inventory for School Students by Sinha and Singh (1984) was used.
2. School Environment Inventory by Mishra (2012) was used.

Procedure

For the investigation, data were collected randomly from 100 learners enrolled in Class 9th in government schools of Chandigarh. Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the heads of the respective schools after explaining the purpose and objectives of the study. Following approval, the research instruments were administered to the selected students in an appropriate school setting. Before administering the instruments, the students were provided with clear instructions regarding the research. They were encouraged to respond to all items honestly. The completed instruments were collected after the students had finished responding.

Analysis of Data, Interpretation and Discussion of the Results

The statistical techniques such as Mean, SD, t-test and Correlation were used for the interpretation of the data. The results are given in table-1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6

Table-1: Comparison of mean scores between adjustment and school environment of secondary school students

Variables	Males					Females				
	N	Mean	SD	SK	KU	N	Mean	SD	SK	KU
Adjustment	50	72.27	11.72	-0.240	0.632	50	81.84	11.15	-0.682	-0.210
School Environment	50	42.10	12.38	0.065	0.284	50	38.12	10.46	0.058	0.315

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To substantiate the data presented in table-1, a bar diagram has been drawn to depict the mean scores of adjustment and school environment has been given in the fig.-1

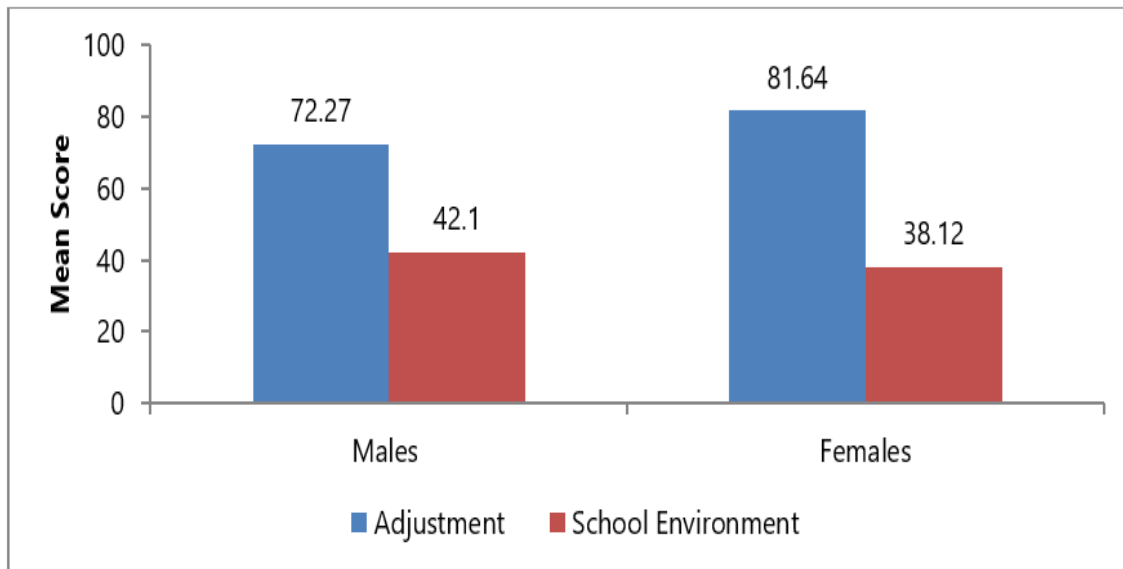


Fig.-1: Bar diagram showing the mean scores of adjustment and school environment of school students

It was observed from the table and fig.-1 that the mean of adjustment of secondary school males was 72.27 that of secondary school students were 81.64. Also, for school environment, it was observed that the mean of secondary school males was 42.10 and that of females' secondary school was 38.12. The result indicates that the secondary school females were found to be more adjustable than males secondary school but boys secondary school have little better school environment as compared to females secondary school.

Upon comparing the standard deviation of two groups as evident from the table and fig. 4.1, it was found that the standard deviation of adjustment of female's secondary school was 11.15 and that of male's secondary school was 11.72. Also, for school environment, it was observed that the standard deviation of female's secondary school was 10.46 that of males' secondary school were 12.38. The result indicates that the score of the males and females secondary school are well distributed.

A comparative analysis of skewness as in table and figure 4.1 indicated the distribution of scores of adjustment of males' secondary school was -0.682 and that of females secondary school was -0.240. Also, for school environment, it was observed that skewness of males' secondary school was 0.058, and that of females' secondary school was 0.065. It was found that the value of skewness lied within the acceptable limits of normality of distribution i.e. ± 1 and thus the distribution of the measures may be considered as normal.

From the table and figure 4.1, the value of kurtosis of adjustment of males' secondary school was -0.210 and that of females secondary school was 0.632. Also, for school environment, it was found that kurtosis of females' secondary school was 0.315, and that of males' secondary school was 0.284. The result indicated that adjustment and school environment of males and female's secondary school kurtosis was platykurtic.

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Analysis of Adjustment of Secondary School Males and Females

The analysis of adjustment of secondary school males and females has been presented in the table-2.

Table-2: *t*-ratio for adjustment of males and females of secondary school students

Variable	Males			Females			SE _D	t-value
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD		
Adjustment	50	78.45	10.09	50	74.32	9.23	1.13	3.04**

** Significant at 0.01 level

(Critical Value 1.98 at 0.05 and 2.63 at 0.01 level, *df* 98).

To substantiate the data presented in table-2, a bar diagram has been drawn to depict the mean scores of adjustment of secondary school males and females has been given in the fig.- 2

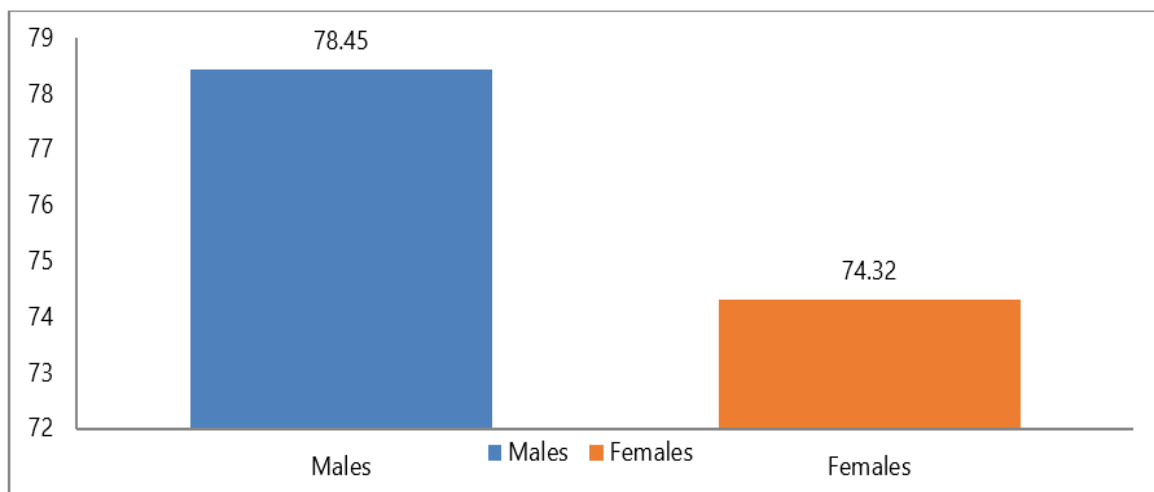


Fig.-2: Bar diagram showing the mean scores of adjustment of school males and females

The result reveals from Table-2 and Figure-2 that the mean adjustment score of secondary school males ($M = 78.45$) is higher than that of secondary school females ($M = 74.32$). The obtained *t*-value of 3.04 indicates that the difference between the two groups is statistically significant at the prescribed level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis stating that there is no statistically meaningful variation in the adjustment of secondary school males and females is rejected. The findings indicate a significant gender difference in adjustment, with males obtaining higher adjustment scores than females in the present sample. The present finding differs from several previous studies that have reported higher adjustment among female students. Basu (2012) found that girls demonstrated statistically meaningful good adjustment than boys. Similarly, Chauhan (2013), Paramanik, Saha, and Mondal (2014), Bhagat (2016), Kaur and Singh (2019), and Tripathi and Pandey (2026) reported significant gender differences in adjustment, with female students showing comparatively higher levels of adjustment. However, the findings of the present study are consistent with the broader body of evidence indicating that gender differences in adjustment are not necessarily uniform across studies. Raviprasad and Pushpa (2024) reported no significant difference in school adjustment between male and female secondary school students. Bunker (2021) likewise reported that gender did not produce statistically meaningful variations. Similarly, Rani (2015) found no significant gender difference in adjustment, while Makwana and Kaji (2014) reported absence of statically meaningful difference between gender in home, school, and emotional adaptation.

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The variation between the present findings and those of earlier studies may be attributable to differences in the educational and social contexts of the participants, sample characteristics, geographical location, age and developmental stage, dimensions of adjustment assessed, and the instruments used to measure adjustment. In the present study, boys obtained higher adjustment scores than females; however, this finding should be interpreted specifically within the context of the sample and setting of the study rather than generalized to all secondary school students. The mixed findings in the existing literature suggest that gender alone may not adequately explain differences in student adjustment and that other individual, family, school, and environmental factors may also contribute to students' adjustment.

Analysis of School Environment of Males and Females of Secondary School Students

The analysis of school environment of secondary school males and females has been presented in the table-3.

Table-3: *t*-ratio for school environment of males and females of secondary school students

Variable	Males			Females			SE _D	t-value
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD		
School Environment	50	50.14	7.10	50	49.69	6.70	1.6	1.43

(Critical Value 1.98 at 0.05 and 2.63 at 0.01 level, *df* 98).

To substantiate the data presented in table-3, a bar diagram has been drawn to depict the mean scores of school environment of school males and females has been given in the fig.-3

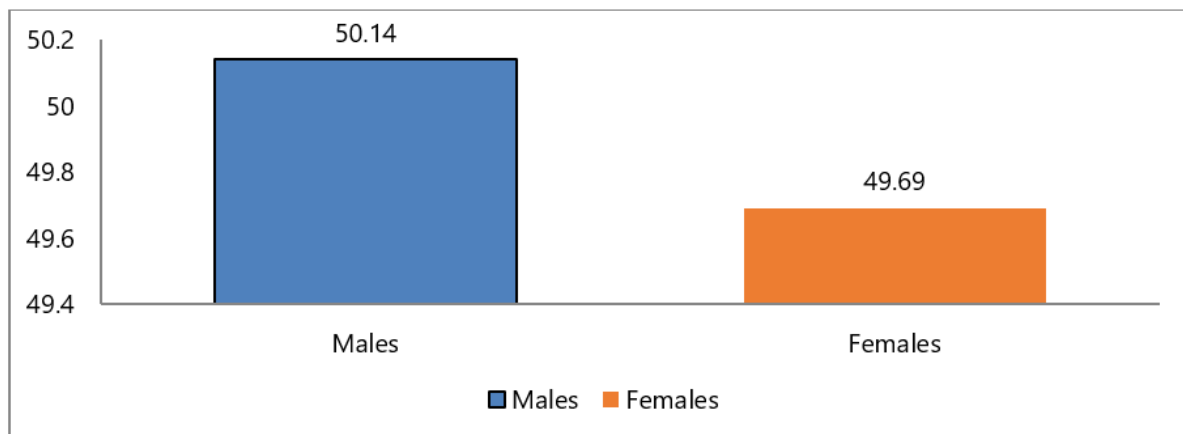


Fig.-3: Bar diagram showing the mean scores of school environment of males and females secondary school students

The result found from Table 3 and Figure 3 that the average score on school environment for secondary school males ($M = 50.14$) is slightly higher than that of secondary school females ($M = 49.69$). The calculated *t*-value of 1.43 shows that the difference between the average value does not reach statistical meaningful at the 0.05 level. Hence, the null hypothesis, which assumes no statistically meaningful variation was observed in the perceived school environment at the high school level of males and females, is accepted. Although boys obtained a marginally higher mean score than girls, the difference is too small to be considered statistically significant. Thus, the findings suggest that males and females in the present sample have broadly similar perceptions of their school environment. The observed difference in mean scores should therefore be interpreted as a descriptive difference rather than evidence of a meaningful gender-based difference. The present finding is consistent

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with Tharagai and Stephen (2022), who reported that school environment no statistically significant difference was observed between male and female students. However, it differs from the findings of Vyas (2017), who reported a statistically meaningful association between male and female among learning atmosphere. Savita and Ksheerasagar (2022), who found significant differences in school environment and among gender. These differences across studies may be attributable to variations in the characteristics of the samples, geographical and institutional contexts, dimensions of school environment examined, and instruments used for its assessment.

Other studies have highlighted the broader importance of school environment for students' educational experiences and outcomes. Job and Pantah (2018) reported that indiscipline can adversely affect students' performance, while Odeh, Oguche, and Ivagher (2015) found that aspects of school climate, discipline, and physical facilities were significantly related to students' academic achievement. These findings indicate that although gender may not necessarily differentiate students' perceptions of the school environment, specific environmental factors such as discipline, school climate, and physical facilities may have important implications for students' educational outcomes.

Relationship between Adjustment and School Environment of Secondary School Males

The analysis of adjustment and school environment of secondary school males has been presented in the table-4

Table-4: Correlation between adjustment and school environment of school males

Variable	N	Value of 'r'
Adjustment and School Environment	50	0.428**

Critical Value 0.273 at 0.05 and 0.354 at 0.01 level, df 48).

It may be seen from the table-4 that the correlation between adjustment and school environment of secondary school males is determined to be insignificant because the Pearson correlation value is 0.428, which is positive significant at both levels. It indicates that the adjustment has a positive significant relationship with school environment of secondary school males. Hence, the null hypothesis H_3 : It proposing the absence of a meaningful association between adjustment and the school setting among secondary-level males was rejected.

Relationship between Adjustment and School Environment of School Females

The analysis of adjustment and school environment of secondary school females has been presented in the table-5

Table-5: Correlation between adjustment and school environment of school females

Variable	N	Value of 'r'
Adjustment and School Environment	50	0.398**

Critical Value 0.273 at 0.05 and 0.354 at 0.01 level, df 48).

Table-5 shows the specifics of the correlation between adjustment and school environment of secondary school females, which in comparison to the table value was significant correlation 0.398, which is both positive and significant at both level. It indicates that the adjustment has a negative but not significant relationship with school environment of secondary school females. Hence, the null hypothesis H_4 : No statistically meaningful

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association between adjustment and the school environment among secondary-level females was rejected.

Relationship between Adjustment and School Environment of Total Sample

The analysis of adjustment and school environment of the total sample has been presented in table-6

Table-6: Correlation between adjustment and school environment of total sample

Variable	N	Value of 'r'
Adjustment and School Environment	100	0.378**

(Critical Value 0.195 at 0.05 and 0.254 at 0.01 level, df 98).

Table-6 shows the specifics of the association between adjustment and school environment of total sample, which is determined to significant because the Pearson correlation value was 0.378, which is both positive significant at both level. It indicates that the adjustment has a positive significant relationship with school environment of total sample rejecting the null hypothesis H₅: There exists no significant relationship between adjustment and school environment of total sample.

Findings

The findings of the present study have been summarized as below:

1. There is statistically meaningful variation between adjustment of adolescent males and females. The school males are found to be more adjustable than that of school females.
2. There exists no statistically meaningful variation between school environment of school males and females. The school males have slightly better school environment than that of school females.
3. There exists statistically meaningful correlation among adjustment and school environment of school males.
4. There exists statistically meaningful correlation among adjustment and school environment of school females.
5. There exists statistically meaningful correlation among adjustment and school environment of total sample.

Implications

The results of the investigation offer useful insights for improving learning methods, particularly in the context of students' adjustment to changing academic, social, emotional, and school environments. Contemporary society is characterized by rapid social, technological, cultural, and educational changes, requiring students to continuously adapt to new circumstances and expectations. Adjustment should therefore be understood not as a static condition but as a dynamic and continuous process through which students respond to the demands of their environment while maintaining an appropriate balance between their personal needs and external expectations.

From an educational perspective, effective adjustment is essential for students' academic engagement, emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, and overall development. Students may experience difficulties in emotional, social, and educational adjustment when they encounter academic pressure, changing expectations, interpersonal problems, inadequate support, or an unfavourable school environment. Such difficulties may adversely

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affect their participation in learning, relationships with peers and teachers, and overall educational experience. The findings therefore highlight the need for schools to recognize student adjustment as an important component of the educational process rather than treating it solely as an individual or psychological issue.

The study has significant implications for teachers and classroom practices. Teachers can contribute to students' adjustment by creating supportive, respectful, and inclusive classroom environments. Positive teacher-student relationships, constructive feedback, sensitivity to individual differences, cooperative learning opportunities, and appropriate academic guidance can help students develop confidence and adaptive coping strategies. Teachers may also identify early signs of emotional, social, or academic difficulties and refer students for appropriate support when necessary.

The findings also have implications for school administrators and educational institutions. Schools should provide a positive psychosocial climate in which students feel safe, respected, accepted, and connected to the school community. Adequate learning facilities, appropriate disciplinary practices, opportunities for student participation, peer support, and effective communication between students, teachers, and school authorities can contribute to a more supportive educational environment. School policies should therefore consider students' adjustment and well-being alongside academic achievement.

School counselling and guidance services also have an important role to play. Counsellors can assist students in developing emotional regulation, interpersonal skills, problem-solving abilities, decision-making skills, and effective coping mechanisms. Regular counselling, orientation programmes, life-skills education, and adjustment-related interventions may be particularly useful for students experiencing difficulties during periods of academic or developmental transition.

The study further suggests the importance of parent-school collaboration. Parents and teachers can work together to identify students' adjustment difficulties and provide consistent emotional, academic, and social support. Open communication between home and school may help ensure that students receive appropriate guidance across both environments. Parents may also benefit from awareness programmes that help them understand the developmental and educational challenges experienced by adolescents.

At the institutional level, the findings can inform the development of student-centered educational program and interventions aimed at strengthening adjustment. Such interventions should address academic, emotional, and social dimensions simultaneously rather than focusing exclusively on academic performance. Orientation programmes for students entering a new educational level, peer-support initiatives, mentoring programmes, stress-management activities, and opportunities for social participation may contribute to more effective adjustment.

Finally, the study reinforces the view that adjustment is an active process involving interaction between the individual and the environment. Students should not be expected to adapt to unfavourable circumstances entirely on their own. Rather, educational institutions have a responsibility to create conditions that enable students to adapt constructively while also responding appropriately to their developmental and educational needs. A supportive school environment, combined with appropriate guidance and individual support, can

contribute to students' academic development, emotional well-being, social competence, and successful participation in school life.

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Conflict of Interest

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