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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADJUSTMENT AND SELF-CONFIDENCE AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

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Abstract- Background: Adolescence is a critical developmental stage marked by rapid physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes. Senior secondary students encounter academic pressure, career-related concerns, peer influence, and identity formation challenges. Adjustment and self-confidence are two key psychological constructs that significantly influence adolescents' well-being and academic success.

Objective: To examine the relationship between adjustment level and self-confidence among senior secondary students.

Method: A correlational research design was employed with 100 senior secondary students (Grades XI–XII) from the Shekhawati region (Churu, Jhunjhunu, Sikar) selected via random sampling. The Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS) and the Adolescents' Self-Confidence Scale were administered.

Results: An independent samples t-test revealed that the obtained t-value (2.46) did not exceed the critical threshold (2.63) at $p < .01$, indicating no statistically significant difference in self-confidence between high- and low-adjustment groups.

Conclusion: Self-confidence among adolescents is shaped by a multidimensional constellation of psychological and environmental factors rather than adjustment level alone. Implications for school-based counseling and intervention programs are discussed.

Keywords- Adjustment; self-confidence; senior secondary students; adolescence; educational psychology; India

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by emotional, social, and academic challenges. During this period, parental involvement, psychological support, and self-confidence play a significant role in

shaping adolescents' adjustment and overall development (Steinberg, 2001). Senior secondary students (Grades XI–XII) experience increased academic pressure, career-related decisions, peer influence, and identity formation (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Two important psychological constructs—adjustment and self-confidence—are central to their well-being and performance.

Adjustment refers to the ability to maintain harmony between personal needs and environmental demands (Fan & Chen, 2001). In students it encompasses: emotional adjustment (managing emotions), social adjustment (building healthy peer and teacher relationships), academic adjustment (coping with academic expectations), and family adjustment (maintaining balanced home relationships). Well-adjusted students manage stress via constructive coping strategies, display greater emotional stability, maintain positive interpersonal relationships, and demonstrate more consistent academic performance (Compas et al., 2001; Rubin et al., 2006; Wentzel, 1998).

Self-confidence refers to an individual's belief in their own abilities, competencies, and capacity to succeed in various life situations. It encompasses a positive self-image, trust in one's decision-making, and willingness to take initiative in challenging circumstances (Harter, 2012). Adolescents with higher self-confidence approach tasks with determination, exhibit resilience, engage actively in classroom discussions, and handle setbacks constructively (Bandura, 1997; Marsh & Craven, 1997).

Research consistently indicates a positive association between adjustment and self-confidence during adolescence (Marsh & Craven, 1997; Steinberg, 2001). Emotional adjustment strengthens self-belief; social adjustment reinforces positive self-concept through peer acceptance; and academic adjustment fosters perceptions of competence and effectiveness. The relationship is often bidirectional: well-adjusted students display greater confidence, while confident students adapt more successfully to new demands.

Despite growing recognition of these constructs, empirical evidence regarding their interaction in Indian senior secondary contexts remains limited. The present study therefore aims to statistically examine whether a significant difference in self-confidence exists between students with high and low adjustment levels.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The relationship between adjustment and self-confidence is grounded in four major psychological theories.

2.1 Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Theory

Adolescence corresponds to the stage of Identity vs. Role Confusion. Successful identity resolution yields fidelity and a strong sense of self, contributing directly to higher self-confidence. Unresolved identity conflict leads to confusion, insecurity, and poor adjustment.

2.2 Bandura's (1977, 1997) Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's concept of self-efficacy—belief in one's capacity to produce desired outcomes—is central to both adjustment and confidence. Students with high self-efficacy approach challenges confidently, recover from setbacks, and demonstrate better emotional adjustment. Supportive observational environments further enhance both constructs.

2.3 Rogers' (1951, 1961) Person-Cantered Theory

Psychological well-being depends on congruence between an individual's self-concept and their lived experiences. Unconditional positive regard from significant others fosters a positive self-concept, higher confidence, and better emotional adjustment, whereas conditional acceptance creates incongruence and maladjustment.

2.4 Maslow's (1943, 1954) Hierarchy of Needs

Belongingness and esteem needs are particularly salient for adolescents. Peer acceptance and validation from teachers and parents fulfill esteem needs, leading to increased self-confidence. Unmet belongingness needs impair social adjustment and diminish confidence.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kazim and Ashwani (2025) found that emotional and academic parental support—but not financial or social support—indirectly improved children's school confidence, attendance, and test scores. Sharma and Promila (2025) reported that gender and school environment independently influenced adjustment problems in senior secondary students. Thakur (2025) found male adolescents to be significantly better adjusted than female adolescents across government and private schools in Himachal Pradesh.

Devi and Kusum (2023) observed a moderate significant correlation between self-esteem and educational adjustment, moderated by school type and gender. Mohini (2022) reported a positive correlation between self-confidence and

achievement motivation in secondary students. Uniya and Khanduri (2020) demonstrated that gender, school management type, and academic stream significantly influenced self-confidence levels.

Shimray et al. (2024) found moderate overall self-confidence in higher secondary students from Manipur, with significant differences by gender, academic stream, and class level. Agrawal (2023) confirmed significant positive relationships among self-esteem, adjustment, psychological well-being, and academic achievement. Ram and Madan (2021) showed that self-confidence, academic effort, and teacher support strongly influenced school adjustment, with female students displaying higher adjustment than males.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Mental health concerns among Indian adolescents are escalating alongside competitive academic demands. Adjustment difficulties affect academic trajectories and career outcomes, while self-confidence underpins leadership, resilience, and personality development. This study contributes empirical evidence that can guide school counselors in designing targeted interventions, and inform educators and parents on supporting adolescents' psychological needs. Early identification of adjustment difficulties may prevent downstream emotional and academic consequences.

V. OBJECTIVE

To assess the relationship between adjustment level and self-confidence among senior secondary students.

VI. HYPOTHESES

H_0: There is no significant difference in self-confidence between students with high and low adjustment levels.

H_1: There is a significant positive difference in self-confidence between students with high and low adjustment levels.

VII. METHOD

7.1 Research Design

A descriptive survey method with a correlational research design was employed. This design is appropriate for educational and psychological research that seeks to understand naturally occurring interrelationships among variables that cannot be experimentally manipulated.

7.2 Participants

The sample comprised 100 senior secondary students (Grades XI–XII) from schools in the Shekhawati region (Churu, Jhunjhunu, and Sikar districts, Rajasthan). Participants were selected via simple

random sampling to minimize bias and enhance representativeness.

7.3 Measures

Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS; Sinha & Singh). The AISS consists of 60 items across three subscales: emotional, social, and educational adjustment. Responses are recorded on a three-point scale (Always / Sometimes / Never). Reliability was established via test-retest, split-half, and Kuder-Richardson methods; validity coefficients were determined using biserial correlation.

Adolescents' Self-Confidence Scale (Zia). This 42-item scale assesses five dimensions: physical, social, emotional, mental, and educational confidence. Items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), with reverse scoring for negatively worded items. Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$ ($p < .01$). Face and content validity were established through expert review.

7.4 Procedure

Data were collected in school settings during regular class hours following institutional approval and participant assent. Participants were divided into high-adjustment (n = 50) and low-adjustment (n = 50) groups based on their AISS median-split scores.

7.5 Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics (M, SD) and an independent samples t-test were computed using SPSS (v.25). The significance level was set at $\alpha = .01$.

VIII. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and t-test results comparing the self-confidence scores of high- and low-adjustment groups.

Table 1

Group Differences in Self-Confidence by Adjustment Level

Group	n	M	SD	t
High Adjustment	50	45.00	9.31	2.46
Low Adjustment	50	49.00	6.73	—

Note. Critical $t(df = 98) = 2.63$ at $p < .01$ (two-tailed). The null hypothesis is retained.

The obtained t-value (2.46) was lower than the critical value (2.63) at $df = 98$, $p < .01$. Consequently, H_0 is retained: no statistically significant difference in self-confidence was observed between high- and low-adjustment groups.

IX. DISCUSSION

Although a numerical difference was observed between the mean self-

confidence scores of high- and low-adjustment groups (M = 45.00 vs. M = 49.00), this difference did not achieve statistical significance, suggesting that adjustment level alone may not function as a strong independent predictor of self-confidence in this sample. These findings are consistent with evidence that the adjustment–self-confidence relationship varies across developmental and contextual factors (Marsh & Craven, 1997; Steinberg, 2001).

Adolescent self-confidence is shaped by multiple interacting factors including parental support, peer validation, domain-specific competencies, intrinsic motivation, and perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Harter, 2012). Students with lower overall adjustment may still exhibit comparable self-confidence due to strengths in specific psychosocial domains. This aligns with Bandura's (1997) position that confidence is domain-specific rather than globally determined by broad adjustment patterns.

The non-significant result also reflects the conceptual distinction between the two constructs. Adjustment represents adaptive functioning across emotional, social, academic, and family contexts (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003), whereas self-confidence is an internal cognitive-evaluative belief system shaped by mastery experiences and self-perception (Harter, 2012). Although theoretically linked, these constructs may operate via partially independent mechanisms (Marsh & Craven, 1997).

Practical implications suggest that school-based programs targeting self-confidence cannot rely solely on improving general adjustment. Interventions should also address domain-specific efficacy beliefs, self-concept, and emotional competencies. These findings support the broader ecological perspective (Steinberg, 2001) that adolescent outcomes are best understood through multilevel, contextual analysis.

X. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the relationship between adjustment and self-confidence among 100 senior secondary students in Rajasthan, India. Although adjustment and self-confidence are theoretically related constructs central to adolescent development, the results indicated no statistically significant difference in self-confidence between high- and low-adjustment groups at the .01 level. These findings highlight the multidimensional nature of adolescent psychological development, wherein self-confidence is influenced by a broader constellation of psychosocial factors beyond adjustment alone.

Educationally, the findings underscore the need for comprehensive, multi-component interventions that target psychological resilience, self-efficacy, positive self-concept, and supportive school and family environments. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, larger and more diverse samples, and multivariate approaches to identify mediating and moderating variables in the adjustment–self-confidence relationship. Structural equation modeling and multi-group analyses across gender, stream, and school type would further illuminate these complex dynamics.

LIMITATIONS

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, moderate sample size, and restriction to the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan, which limits generalizability. Median-split group classification may introduce measurement artifacts. Future studies should use continuous variable analyses and multi-site sampling frameworks.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles for research involving human participants. Institutional approval and student assent were obtained. Participation was voluntary, and data were treated with confidentiality.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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