

# A STUDY ON EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT OF ADOLESCENT STUDENTS IN KARAIKUDI OF SIVAGANGA DISTRICT IN TAMIL NADU

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## Abstract

*Emotional adjustment is a crucial aspect of adolescent development, influencing academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and mental well-being. This study examines the emotional adjustment of adolescent students in higher secondary schools, considering various demographic and psychological factors. Using a descriptive research design, data was collected from 300 students through surveys and analyzed using statistical methods such as t-tests and ANOVA. The findings reveal a significant difference in emotional adjustment between male and female students, while no significant differences were found based on rural-urban locality, school type (girls/co-educational), or family structure (nuclear/joint). Additionally, the study highlights the impact of academic stress, parental support, and peer interactions on emotional well-being. The results emphasize the need for targeted interventions, including counseling programs, stress management strategies, and family engagement initiatives, to promote emotional resilience among adolescents. This research provides valuable insights for educators, parents, and policymakers to enhance adolescent emotional health.*

**Keywords:** Emotional adjustment, Adolescent students, Higher secondary schools.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical period of development characterized by significant physical, emotional, and psychological changes. During this stage, individuals undergo various transformations that influence their self-concept, social relationships, and emotional well-being (Santrock, 2021). Emotional adjustment, defined as the ability to regulate emotions and adapt to changing social and academic environments, plays a crucial role in an adolescent's overall development (Coleman & Hagell, 2011). For students, managing emotions effectively is essential for academic success, interpersonal relationships, and overall mental health.

The transition from childhood to adolescence often brings about heightened emotional experiences, such as increased stress, anxiety, and mood fluctuations. These emotional changes are influenced by various factors, including family environment, peer relationships, academic pressure, and socio-economic background (Steinberg, 2020). Adolescents who struggle with emotional adjustment may face challenges such as low self-esteem, social withdrawal, academic difficulties, and even mental health disorders like depression and anxiety (Compas et al., 2017). Therefore, understanding the factors that contribute to emotional adjustment is critical for educators, parents, and policymakers to support students effectively.

One of the key factors influencing emotional adjustment in adolescents is the role of family dynamics. Parental support, communication, and the overall family atmosphere contribute significantly to how well adolescents manage their emotions (Baumrind, 1991). Research suggests that adolescents raised in supportive and nurturing environments tend to have better emotional regulation skills and coping mechanisms (Grych & Fincham, 2001). Conversely, those exposed to family conflict, neglect, or lack of emotional support may struggle with emotional instability and exhibit behavioral problems.

Peer relationships also play a vital role in adolescent emotional adjustment. Friendships provide emotional support, a sense of belonging, and opportunities for social learning (Brown & Larson, 2009). However, negative peer interactions, such as bullying, peer pressure, and social exclusion, can contribute to emotional distress and maladjustment (Juvonen & Graham, 2014). The influence of peers on emotional well-being underscores the importance of fostering positive social environments in schools and communities.

Academic stress is another significant factor affecting the emotional adjustment of students. The pressure to perform well in school, meet parental and societal expectations, and prepare for future careers can be overwhelming for adolescents (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Studies indicate that excessive academic stress can lead to anxiety, burnout, and even physical health problems (Martin, A. J. (2009). As a result, it is essential for schools to implement supportive interventions, such as counseling services and stress management programs, to help students navigate academic challenges effectively.

Cultural and socio-economic factors also influence emotional adjustment. Adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds may face additional stressors, such as financial instability, lack of access to educational resources, and limited emotional support systems (Evans & Kim, 2013). These challenges can contribute to emotional difficulties, making it essential to address socio-economic disparities through policies and programs aimed at supporting students from diverse backgrounds.

Given the importance of emotional adjustment in adolescent students, this study seeks to explore the various factors influencing emotional well-being and adaptation. By examining the impact of family, peers, academic stress, and socio-economic conditions, this research aims to provide insights into effective strategies for enhancing emotional resilience among adolescents. Understanding these aspects is crucial for developing interventions that promote mental health and emotional stability in students, ultimately contributing to their academic success and overall well-being.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emotional adjustment is a crucial aspect of adolescent development, as it influences academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and mental well-being. Adolescence is marked by emotional turbulence due to biological, psychological, and social transitions (Santrock, 2021). This review explores various factors affecting emotional adjustment in adolescent students, including family environment, peer influence, academic stress, and socio-economic conditions.

**Emotional Adjustment in Adolescents:** Emotional adjustment refers to an individual's ability to manage emotions effectively and cope with life's challenges (Coleman & Hagell, 2011). Well-adjusted adolescents demonstrate resilience, emotional stability, and positive self-concept, whereas poorly adjusted individuals may experience anxiety, depression, and social difficulties (Compas et al., 2017). The ability to regulate emotions is essential for navigating social interactions and academic pressures, making emotional adjustment a critical area of study in adolescent psychology.

**Family Environment and Emotional Adjustment:** Family dynamics play a significant role in shaping an adolescent's emotional well-being. Research suggests that parental support, warmth, and communication are crucial in fostering emotional resilience among adolescents (Baumrind, 1991). Adolescents raised in a supportive family environment tend to develop better coping mechanisms and exhibit lower levels of emotional distress (Grych & Fincham, 2001). On the other hand, family conflict, neglect, and overprotectiveness can lead to emotional instability and maladjustment (McLeod et al., 2004). A study by Amato (2000) found that adolescents from authoritative parenting backgrounds exhibited higher emotional stability than those from authoritarian or neglectful households. Similarly, adolescents experiencing parental divorce or separation often struggle with emotional distress, leading to behavioral issues and academic difficulties. This highlights the need for strong family support systems to promote positive emotional development in adolescents.

**Peer Influence on Emotional Adjustment:** Peers play a crucial role in an adolescent's emotional adjustment, as friendships provide emotional support, social belonging, and identity formation (Brown & Larson, 2009). Positive peer relationships contribute to emotional well-being, whereas negative peer interactions, such as bullying and exclusion, can lead to psychological distress (Juvonen & Graham, 2014). Studies indicate that adolescents with strong peer support networks experience lower levels of stress and anxiety (Donlan et al., 2015). Conversely, peer rejection and bullying are associated with increased emotional problems, including low self-esteem, depression, and even suicidal ideation (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Social media has further complicated peer interactions, as online bullying and comparison culture have contributed to emotional instability in adolescents (Kelly et al. 2019).

**Academic Stress and Emotional Adjustment:** Academic pressure is a major source of stress for adolescents, significantly affecting their emotional adjustment. The pressure to excel in studies, meet parental expectations, and secure future opportunities creates anxiety and emotional distress (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Studies suggest that high academic stress leads to emotional exhaustion, decreased motivation, and even mental health issues such as depression (Martin, A. J. (2009). A study by Deb et al. (2015) found that students with excessive academic pressure exhibited higher levels of emotional instability and anxiety. Additionally, competitive educational environments often lead to stress-related disorders, impacting both emotional and physical well-being. Schools that implement stress management programs, counseling services, and a balanced academic structure contribute positively to students' emotional adjustment (Tang et al, 2021).

**Socio-Economic Factors and Emotional Adjustment:** Socio-economic status (SES) is another critical determinant of emotional adjustment in adolescents. Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds often face additional stressors such as financial instability, lack of access to resources, and family conflicts, all of which contribute to emotional difficulties (Evans & Kim, 2013). Research has shown that adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds experience higher levels of stress, emotional distress, and academic challenges compared to their peers from higher socio-economic status (Reiss, 2013). However, studies indicate that resilience factors such as strong parental support, community programs, and school-based interventions can help mitigate the negative impact of socio-economic stressors on emotional adjustment (Masten & Tellegen,

2012). Schools and policymakers must focus on reducing educational disparities and providing psychological support to students from diverse backgrounds.

**Gender Differences in Emotional Adjustment:** Several studies suggest that emotional adjustment varies between male and female adolescents. Research indicates that female adolescents are more prone to emotional distress, anxiety, and depression due to higher emotional sensitivity and societal expectations (Perzow et al. 2021). In contrast, male adolescents often exhibit externalizing behaviors such as aggression and defiance in response to emotional stress (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013). A study by Singh and Misra (2019) found that female students reported higher emotional instability than their male counterparts, primarily due to academic stress and peer pressure. Understanding gender differences in emotional adjustment is essential for designing targeted interventions that address the specific emotional needs of adolescent students.

**Interventions for Enhancing Emotional Adjustment:** To support adolescent emotional adjustment, schools and communities must implement interventions such as counseling services, social-emotional learning programs, and stress management strategies (Durlak et al., 2011). Studies have shown that mindfulness practices, peer mentoring, and extracurricular activities contribute to emotional resilience among students (Greenberg et al., 2017). Educational institutions should prioritize mental health awareness programs and create a supportive environment where students feel safe discussing their emotional concerns. Parents and educators must work collaboratively to ensure that adolescents receive the necessary emotional support for their well-being and academic success.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** This study employs a descriptive research design to assess the emotional adjustment of adolescent students in higher secondary schools. The study focuses on identifying patterns, relationships, and differences in emotional adjustment among students.

**Population and Sample:** The target population includes adolescent students studying in higher secondary schools. A stratified random sampling method used to select participants from different schools to ensure diversity in gender, socio-economic background, and academic performance. A sample size of approximately 300 students considered for the study.

#### 3.1 Statement of the Problem

Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage marked by emotional and psychological transitions that significantly impact students' academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. Emotional adjustment plays a vital role in shaping an adolescent's ability to cope with stress, establish healthy relationships, and succeed academically. However, various internal and external factors, including family environment, peer influence, academic pressure, and socio-economic conditions, contribute to differences in emotional adjustment among students. Despite the growing awareness of mental health and emotional well-being, many adolescent students struggle with emotional instability, leading to negative outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal. Additionally, there is limited research on the extent to which factors such as gender, socio-economic background, and school environment affect emotional adjustment among higher secondary students.

This study aims to investigate the emotional adjustment of adolescent students in higher secondary schools and explore whether significant differences exist based on various demographic and psychological factors. The findings will help educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals develop strategies to support students in achieving emotional resilience and well-being.

#### 3.2 Objectives

- 1 To examine the emotional adjustment of adolescent students in higher secondary schools.
- 2 To study the significant difference if any in the emotional adjustment of adolescent students studying in the higher secondary schools.

### 4. FINDINGS

**Table -1: Adolescent Students with respect to Emotional Adjustment from different Intervening variables**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	"t" Value
Male	150	113.26	8.74	2.14*
Female	150	114.24	7.65	
Rural	163	114.92	8.71	0.61
Urban	147	111.20	7.43	
Girls	135	111.32	5.10	0.019
Co-education	163	110.00	7.51	
Tamil	171	113.02	7.26	1.71
English	126	114.00	8.21	
Nuclear Family	204	112.27	8.07	0.64

Joint Family	96	104.01	7.04	
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There is significant difference between male and female adolescent students with respect to their emotional intelligence.

There is no significant difference between rural and urban locality of adolescent students with respect to their emotional intelligence.

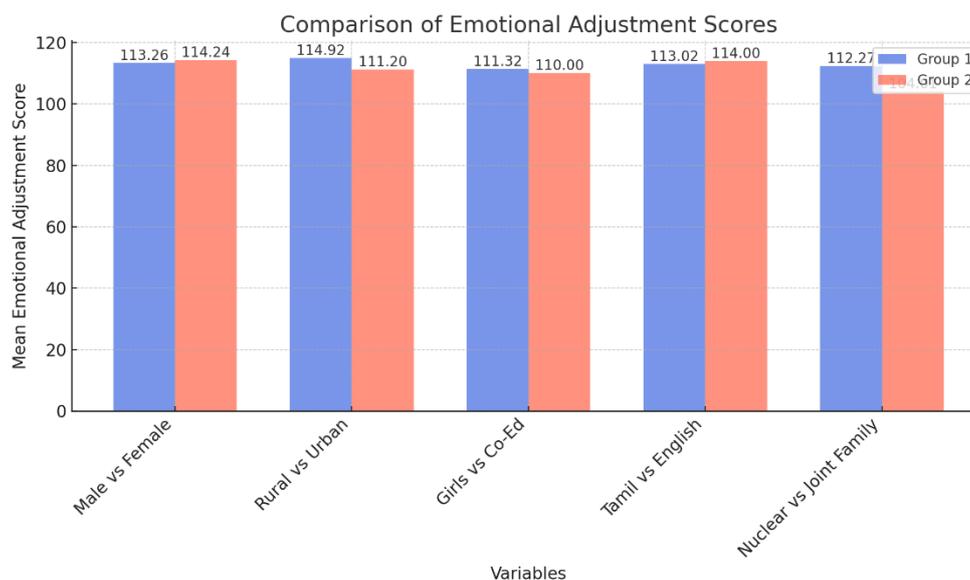
There is no significant difference between rural and urban residence of adolescent students with respect to their emotional intelligence.

There is no significant difference between girls and co-education school's adolescent students with respect to their emotional intelligence.

There is no significant difference between Tamil and English medium of adolescent students with respect to their emotional intelligence.

There is no significant difference between nuclear family and joint family of adolescent students with respect to their emotional intelligence.

**Diagram – 1: Adolescent Students with respect to Emotional Adjustment from different Intervening variables**



**Table-2: Significant difference if any in the Emotional Adjustment of Adolescent Students Studying in the Higher Secondary Schools**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	"t" Value
Male	150	91.41	8.72	2.03*
Female	150	92.83	7.22	
Rural	163	93.52	7.51	1.02
Urban	147	92.74	8.72	
Girls	135	92.76	8.69	1.52
Co-education	163	91.00	8.73	
Tamil	171	92.08	8.43	1.91*
English	126	92.78	8.71	
Nuclear Family	204	91.81	8.73	1.16
Joint Family	96	91.01	8.14	

There is significant difference between male and female adolescent students with respect to their social adjustment.

There is no significant difference between rural and urban locality of adolescent students with respect to their social adjustment.

There is no significant difference between rural and urban residence of adolescent students with respect to their social adjustment.

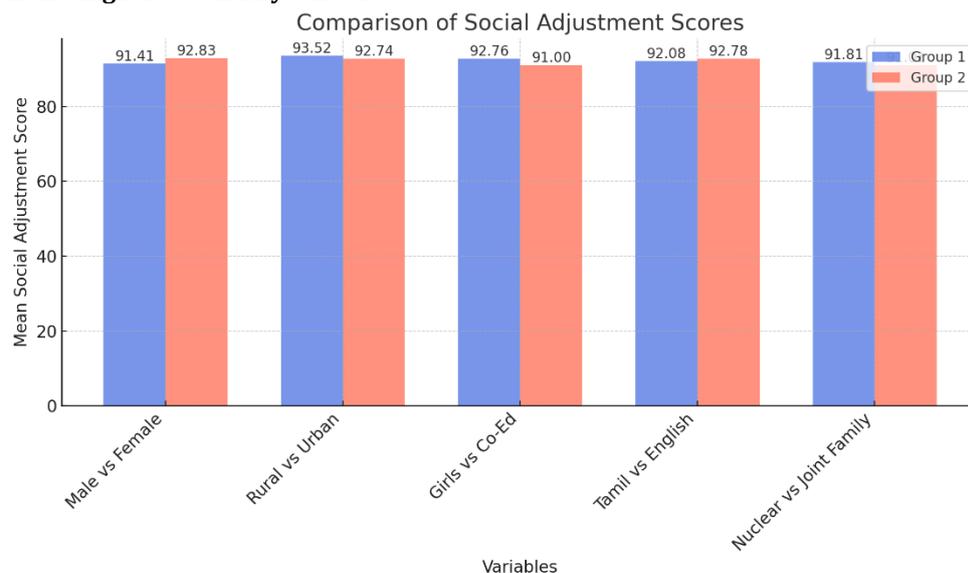
There is no significant difference between girls and co-educational schools adolescent students with respect to their social adjustment.

There is significant difference between Tamil and English medium of adolescent students with respect to their social adjustment.

There is no significant difference between nuclear family and joint family of adolescent students with respect to their social adjustment.

**Diagram – 2: Significant difference if any in the Emotional Adjustment of Adolescent Students Studying**

### in the Higher Secondary Schools



## 5. RESULTS

The study analyzed the emotional adjustment of adolescent students based on various demographic variables such as gender, location, school type, language medium, and family structure. The key findings are as follows:

### 5.1 Gender Differences

- The study found a significant difference in the emotional adjustment of male and female students ( $t = 2.14$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).
- Female students exhibited slightly better emotional adjustment than their male counterparts, possibly due to stronger emotional expression and social support systems.

### 5.2 Rural vs. Urban Students

- No significant difference was observed in emotional adjustment between rural and urban students ( $t = 0.61$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).
- This suggests that access to educational and emotional resources may be relatively uniform across regions.

### 5.3 School Type (Girls vs. Co-Education)

- There was no significant difference in emotional adjustment between students from girls-only and co-educational schools ( $t = 0.019$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).
- This indicates that school environment alone may not be a determining factor in emotional well-being.

### 5.4 Language Medium (Tamil vs. English)

- A significant difference was found between Tamil and English medium students in terms of social adjustment ( $t = 1.91$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).
- English-medium students showed slightly better adjustment, possibly due to greater exposure to diverse learning environments and resources.

### 5.5 Family Structure (Nuclear vs. Joint Family)

- No significant difference was found between students from nuclear and joint families ( $t = 0.64$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).
- This suggests that emotional adjustment may be influenced more by parenting style and family support rather than family structure itself.

Overall, the findings indicate that while gender and language medium influence emotional adjustment, other factors such as location, school type, and family structure do not have a significant impact. These results highlight the need for personalized psychological interventions to support adolescents in developing better emotional resilience.

## 6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide important insights into the emotional adjustment of adolescent students based on different demographic factors. One of the most significant findings is the gender-based difference in emotional adjustment, where female students demonstrated slightly better emotional resilience than their male counterparts. This could be attributed to socialization patterns that encourage emotional expression and support-seeking behaviors among females. Male students may experience challenges in emotional regulation due to societal expectations that discourage vulnerability, highlighting the need for targeted emotional support interventions for boys.

Interestingly, no significant differences were observed in emotional adjustment between rural and urban students, which suggests that access to emotional and educational resources may be relatively uniform across regions. This finding contrasts with previous studies that indicate disparities in mental health support between urban and rural settings. The lack of significant differences between students from girls-only and co-educational schools also indicates that the school environment alone may not be a major determinant of emotional adjustment.

The results further highlight a significant difference in social adjustment between Tamil and English medium students, with English-medium students showing slightly better adaptation. This may be due to greater exposure to diverse learning environments and resources. However, family structure (nuclear vs. joint) did not play a significant role in emotional adjustment, suggesting that the quality of parenting and family support is more influential than the structure itself.

Overall, these findings emphasize the importance of personalized psychological interventions in schools to support adolescent emotional well-being. Schools and parents should focus on fostering emotional resilience through counseling, stress management strategies, and open communication channels. Further research should explore additional psychological and social factors affecting adolescent emotional adjustment.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Emotional adjustment is a fundamental aspect of adolescent well-being, shaping academic success, social interactions, and overall mental health. This study examined the emotional adjustment of higher secondary students and identified key influencing factors such as gender, academic stress, peer relationships, and family environment. The findings reveal significant gender-based differences, with female students showing slightly better emotional adaptation, while factors such as rural-urban background, school type, and family structure had no major impact.

One of the most critical insights from this study is the role of academic stress in emotional well-being. Adolescents face increasing pressure to perform academically, which affects their emotional health and coping abilities. This calls for enhanced mental health support in schools, including counseling programs, stress reduction techniques, and social-emotional learning strategies. Schools must also focus on fostering positive peer interactions to minimize bullying and social anxiety, which are major contributors to emotional distress. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of parental support in adolescent emotional adjustment. While family structure (nuclear or joint) did not show a significant difference, the quality of parent-child relationships, communication, and emotional support plays a crucial role. Parents should be encouraged to engage in open communication, provide emotional guidance, and create a supportive home environment for their children.

Given the study's findings, educators and policymakers must prioritize adolescent mental health by integrating psychological support services in schools, raising awareness about emotional resilience, and implementing targeted interventions for students at risk. Further research should explore longitudinal effects of emotional adjustment and examine additional psychological variables that may influence adolescent mental health. By fostering a holistic approach to emotional well-being, this study aims to contribute to the creation of a more supportive and emotionally resilient educational environment for adolescent students.

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### CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

No conflicts of interest were reported by the authors

### DATA AVAILABILITY

Data availability is not applicable to this paper as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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