



GENDER AND ACADEMIC-STREAM DIFFERENCES IN EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL, AND EDUCATIONAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS IN SHIMLA, INDIA

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Abstract

Adolescents' capacity to negotiate emotional demands, peer relationships, and school expectations is central to well-being and educational participation. This cross-sectional descriptive survey examined gender and academic-stream differences in emotional, social, and educational adjustment among 100 Class XI students enrolled in three government senior secondary schools in Shimla district, Himachal Pradesh, India. The sample comprised equal cells of boys and girls in Arts and Science streams ($n = 25$ each). Adjustment was assessed with the Adjustment Inventory for School Students developed by A. K. P. Sinha and R. P. Singh, in which higher scores indicate poorer adjustment. Independent-samples t -tests and Hedges' g were used for group comparisons, while score categories described adjustment levels. Girls reported better emotional ($M = 6.94$, $SD = 2.84$) and social adjustment ($M = 6.66$, $SD = 3.26$) than boys (emotional: $M = 8.12$, $SD = 2.44$; social: $M = 8.52$, $SD = 2.44$), with moderate standardized differences ($g = 0.44$ and 0.64 , respectively). The gender difference in educational adjustment was smaller and did not reach the conventional $.05$ threshold ($g = 0.39$). Within the Science stream, girls showed better social and educational adjustment than boys; among girls, Science students showed better social and educational adjustment than Arts students. Educational adjustment was unsatisfactory or very unsatisfactory for 62% of boys and 54% of girls. The findings point to a need for gender-responsive counselling alongside school-wide academic-transition support. Because schools were selected conveniently, the sample was small and localized, and multiple unadjusted comparisons were conducted, the results should be interpreted as exploratory rather than population estimates.

Keywords: adolescence; school adjustment; gender; academic stream; senior secondary education; Himachal Pradesh; India

1. Introduction

Adjustment is the continuing process through which individuals respond to their own needs and to the demands of the environments in which they participate. During adolescence, this process becomes especially salient as rapid biological and psychological changes coincide with expanding peer networks, changing family expectations, identity formation, and increasingly consequential educational choices. School adjustment is therefore multidimensional: emotional adjustment concerns the regulation of distress and affective stability; social adjustment concerns participation and relationships with peers and adults; and educational adjustment concerns engagement with curricular, co-curricular, and institutional demands.

The transition to senior secondary school intensifies these demands. Students must adapt to more specialized curricula, examination pressures, career-related decisions, and new status expectations. In the Indian system, selection into Arts or Science streams can shape daily workload, perceived prestige, peer composition, and future educational opportunities. Gender norms may simultaneously influence emotional expression, help-seeking, mobility, interpersonal expectations, and access to academic support. Yet gender should not be treated as an isolated individual attribute: its association with adjustment may vary across academic and institutional contexts.

Prior research has linked adolescent adjustment with school context, family relationships, emotional competence, socioeconomic circumstances, disability, and academic achievement. Studies in India have also reported gender-related differences, although their direction and magnitude are inconsistent across settings and adjustment domains (Raju & Rahamtulla, 2007; Rajeswari et al., 2013; Vaghela, 2015; Kasundra & Singh, 2020; Firdous & Alam, 2022). Such variation supports domain-specific and locally grounded investigation rather than assuming a single general adjustment pattern.

Evidence from Himachal Pradesh remains limited, particularly for students in government schools at the point of stream specialization. Shimla district combines urban and peri-urban educational environments, but students' experiences cannot be inferred from national evidence alone. A focused analysis can identify patterns that warrant counselling, transition support, and subsequent larger-scale research.

1.1 Objectives and hypotheses: The study compared emotional, social, and educational adjustment (a) between boys and girls overall; (b) between Arts and Science students

within each gender; and (c) between boys and girls within each stream. It also described gender-specific adjustment categories. The null hypothesis for each comparison was that the two groups did not differ in the relevant domain. Because the available dataset supports separate domain comparisons rather than a validated global score analysis, the three domains were retained as distinct outcomes.

2. Method

2.1 Design and setting: A cross-sectional descriptive survey was conducted in three government senior secondary schools in Shimla district, Himachal Pradesh: Government Senior Secondary School Phagli, Government Senior Secondary School Sanjauli, and Government Senior Secondary School Chota Shimla. The study year was not reported in the source manuscript and must be supplied before submission.

2.2 Participants and sampling: The analytic sample included 100 Class XI students aged within the instrument's intended 14–18-year range. Three schools were selected by convenience, after which students were described as randomly selected within gender and stream strata. The final sample was balanced across four groups: Arts boys ($n = 25$), Science boys ($n = 25$), Arts girls ($n = 25$), and Science girls ($n = 25$). School contributions were 24 students from Phagli, 33 from Sanjauli, and 43 from Chota Shimla. The balanced design facilitates group comparison but does not remove selection bias arising from convenience selection of schools.

2.3 Measure: Adjustment was measured using the Adjustment Inventory for School Students developed and standardized by A.

K. P. Sinha and R. P. Singh (2004). The inventory contains 60 dichotomous items, with 20 items each assessing emotional, social, and educational adjustment. Responses indicating maladjustment receive 1 and responses indicating adjustment receive 0; consequently, higher domain scores represent poorer adjustment. The source manual reports strong reliability estimates across split-half, test-retest, and Kuder–Richardson 20 procedures (approximately .90–.96 across domains and total score). It also provides sex-specific category thresholds ranging from excellent to very unsatisfactory. Because reliability was not recalculated in the present sample and the instrument uses gender-specific norms, both points should be considered when interpreting results.

2.4 Procedure and ethics: The investigator obtained permission from school principals, explained that participation would not harm students, emphasized confidentiality, administered the inventory in classrooms according to its instructions, checked response completeness, and thanked participants and staff. The supplied record does not document approval by a research ethics committee, parental permission, or student assent procedures. These details must be verified and reported accurately before journal submission; retrospective invention of ethical approval or consent is not acceptable.

2.5 Statistical analysis: Means and standard deviations summarized domain scores. Independent-samples t-tests compared two groups at a time using a two-sided α of .05. The correct degrees of freedom were 98 for overall gender comparisons (50 versus 50) and 48 for comparisons involving two $n = 25$ subgroups. Hedges' g , calculated from pooled standard deviations with small-sample correction, quantified standardized mean differences; positive values indicate that the first-listed group had poorer adjustment. Category frequencies and percentages were used descriptively. No multiplicity adjustment was reported for the 15 t-tests, and raw participant-level data were unavailable for checking assumptions, confidence intervals, multivariable models, or school-level clustering. Results are therefore treated as exploratory.

3. Results

3.1 Overall gender differences: Boys had higher (poorer) mean scores than girls in all three domains. Differences were statistically significant for emotional and social adjustment but narrowly non-significant for educational adjustment. The largest overall gender difference was in social adjustment ($g = 0.64$).

Domain	Boys M (SD)	Girls M (SD)	t	df	p*	Hedges' g
Emotional	8.12 (2.44)	6.94 (2.84)	2.229	98	.028	0.44
Social	8.52 (2.44)	6.66 (3.26)	3.232	98	.002	0.64
Educational	8.26 (2.31)	7.20 (3.05)	1.959	98	.053	0.39

*Note. Higher scores indicate poorer adjustment. *Two-sided p values were derived from the reported t statistics and degrees of freedom and are approximate.*

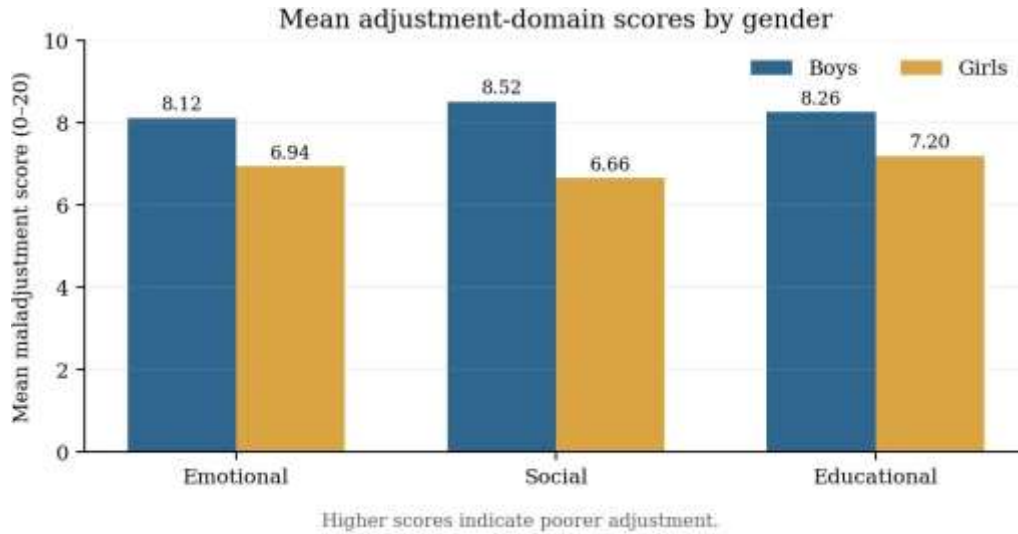


Figure 1. Mean emotional, social, and educational adjustment scores by gender.

3.2 Stream comparisons within gender

Among boys, none of the Arts–Science comparisons reached .05, although Arts boys had consistently poorer mean scores. Among girls, Science students had better social and educational adjustment than Arts students. The educational difference among girls was large ($g = 1.02$), while the social difference was moderate ($g = 0.65$).

Gender	Domain	Arts M (SD)	Science M (SD)	t (df=48)	Hedges' g
Boys	Emotional	Arts 8.64 (2.51)	Science 7.60 (2.25)	1.543	0.43
Boys	Social	Arts 8.96 (2.22)	Science 8.08 (2.56)	1.299	0.36
Boys	Educational	Arts 8.60 (2.40)	Science 7.92 (2.17)	1.050	0.29
Girls	Emotional	Arts 7.56 (2.58)	Science 6.32 (2.95)	1.582	0.44
Girls	Social	Arts 7.68 (2.57)	Science 5.64 (3.55)	2.329	0.65
Girls	Educational	Arts 8.60 (1.77)	Science 5.80 (3.39)	3.659	1.02

Note. Positive g values indicate poorer adjustment among Arts students. At $df = 48$, $|t| > 2.011$ corresponds approximately to $p < .05$ (two-sided).

3.3 Gender comparisons within stream

Within Arts, gender differences did not reach .05. Within Science, girls had better social and educational adjustment than boys, with moderate-to-large standardized differences. Emotional adjustment in Science showed a smaller, non-significant difference.

Stream	Domain	Boys M (SD)	Girls M (SD)	t (df=48)	Hedges' g
Arts	Emotional	Boys 8.64 (2.51)	Girls 7.56 (2.58)	1.500	0.42
Arts	Social	Boys 8.96 (2.22)	Girls 7.68 (2.56)	1.890	0.53
Arts	Educational	Boys 8.60 (2.40)	Girls 8.60 (1.77)	0.000	0.00
Science	Emotional	Boys 7.60 (2.25)	Girls 6.32 (2.95)	1.726	0.48
Science	Social	Boys 8.08 (2.56)	Girls 5.64 (3.55)	2.785	0.78
Stream	Domain	Boys M (SD)	Girls M (SD)	t (df=48)	Hedges' g
Science	Educational	Boys 7.92 (2.17)	Girls 5.80 (3.39)	2.630	0.74

Note. Positive *g* values indicate poorer adjustment among boys. At *df* = 48, $|t| > 2.011$ corresponds approximately to $p < .05$ (two-sided).

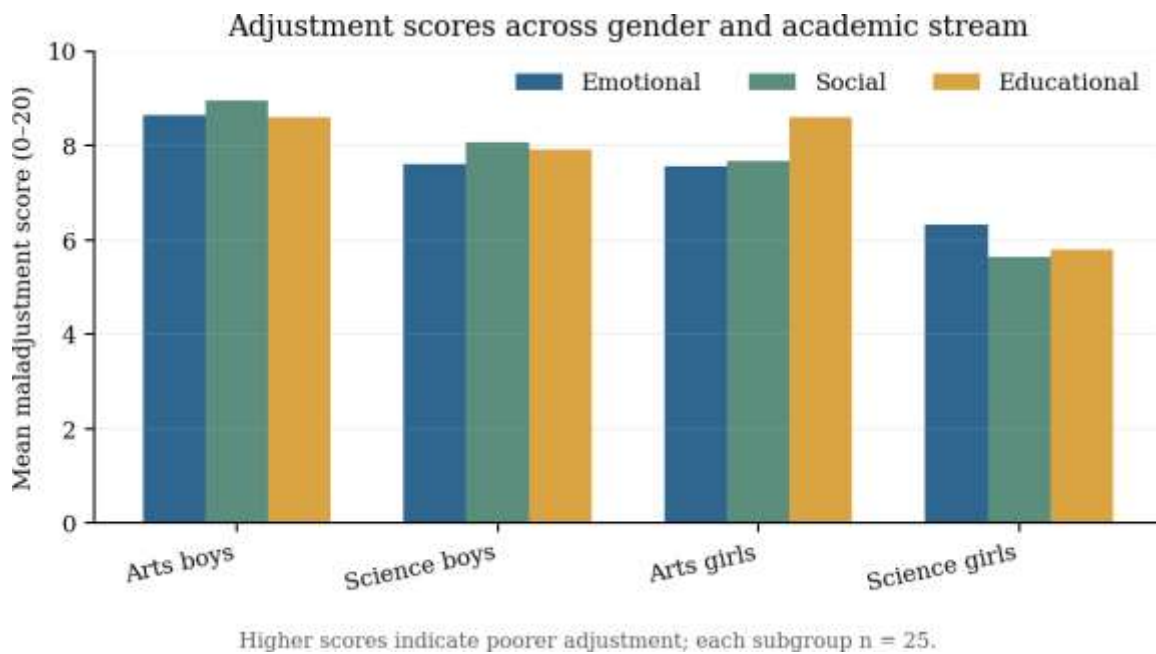


Figure 2. Adjustment-domain scores across the four gender-by-stream subgroups.

3.4 Adjustment categories

Category distributions reinforced the mean comparisons. Emotional adjustment was unsatisfactory or very unsatisfactory for 58% of boys and 44% of girls. Social adjustment was unsatisfactory or very unsatisfactory for 62% of boys and 38% of girls. Educational adjustment was the area of broadest concern: 62% of boys and 54% of girls fell in the two least favourable categories. Conversely, no boy and no girl was categorized as excellent in emotional adjustment, while only 2% of boys and 6% of girls were categorized as excellent in educational

adjustment. Because category cut-offs differ slightly by gender in the instrument manual, direct categorical comparisons should be interpreted cautiously.

Educational-adjustment categories for the full sample (N = 100)

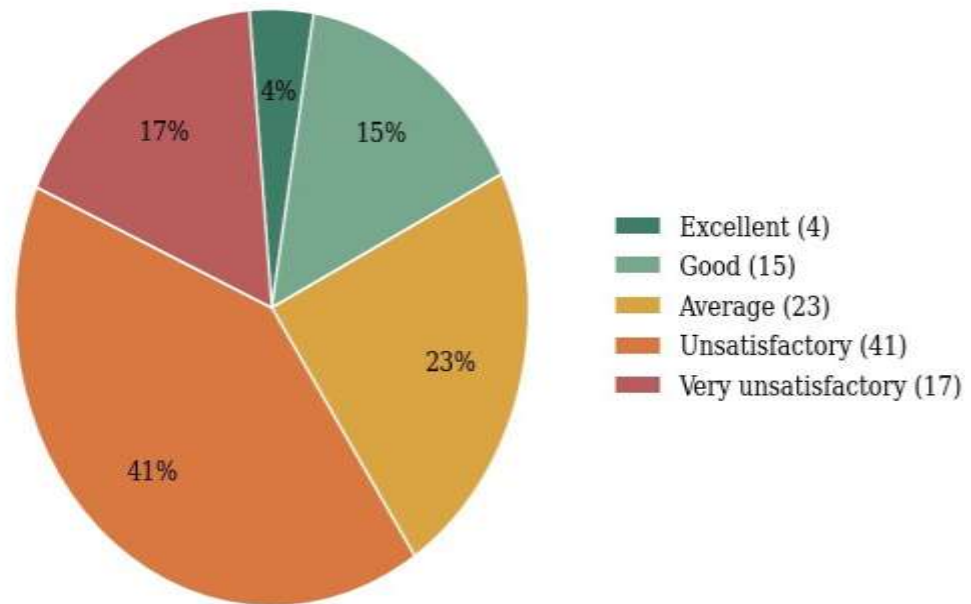


Figure 3. Distribution of educational-adjustment categories in the full sample

4. Discussion

The study found domain-specific gender and stream patterns rather than a uniform adjustment advantage. Overall, girls showed better emotional and social adjustment than boys, while the educational difference was smaller. Social adjustment produced the most pronounced overall gender difference. These findings align with the proposition that emotional regulation and interpersonal participation are partly shaped by gendered socialization and school contexts, but the design cannot identify mechanisms. Labels such as “emotionally unstable” or “socially submissive,” used in the original thesis, exceed what a screening inventory and group means can establish; the present article therefore uses the narrower language of better or poorer adjustment scores.

Stream differences were concentrated among girls. Girls in Science had better social and educational adjustment than girls in Arts, whereas Arts–Science differences among boys did not reach the conventional threshold. Within-stream comparisons likewise showed that gender differences were most visible in Science. This pattern may reflect selection into streams, prior achievement, family expectations, peer climates, or differential access to support rather than an effect of the curriculum itself. Since stream was not randomly assigned and background characteristics were not measured, causal interpretations are unwarranted.

A particularly important finding is the high proportion of students in unfavourable educational-adjustment categories across both genders. Senior secondary students face curricular specialization, examination demands, and decisions about higher education. Difficulties may therefore be institutional as well as individual. A whole-school response should combine orientation to stream expectations, study-skills and time-management support, accessible counselling, teacher referral pathways, peer mentoring, and structured communication with families. Gender-responsive support is appropriate, but services should avoid stereotyping boys as inherently less emotionally competent or assuming that girls uniformly adjust well.

The statistical results also require restraint. Fifteen independent t-tests were reported without correction for multiple comparisons; at $\alpha = .05$, the family-wise false-positive risk is elevated. A conservative Bonferroni threshold (.0033) would retain the overall social comparison but would not retain most subgroup findings, with the educational comparison among girls falling near rather than below that threshold. Moreover, students were nested within three schools, but the available summary data did not permit cluster-adjusted analysis. Effect sizes are therefore more informative than dichotomous significance labels, yet their uncertainty cannot be fully

evaluated without raw data.

3.5 Implications for policy and practice

Schools in Shimla and comparable settings could introduce adjustment screening as part of the transition into Class XI, provided that screening is confidential, non-stigmatizing, and linked to support rather than labelling. Counselling provision should address emotional regulation, peer relationships, academic planning, and help-seeking. Teachers can use advisory periods to normalize transition difficulties and identify students whose participation or engagement changes markedly. The concentration of poor educational adjustment across genders also supports reviewing workload, co-curricular access, guidance on stream choice, and the responsiveness of classroom practices—not only attempting to change students.

3.6 Limitations and directions for research

The study is limited by convenience selection of three government schools in one district, a small cross-sectional sample, reliance on a single self-report inventory, absence of socioeconomic and family covariates, and lack of participant-level data for assumption checks. The balanced cells were analytically useful but may not represent actual stream enrolment. The instrument's gender-specific categorical norms complicate direct comparisons, and contemporary validation evidence for the local population was not available in the source record. The data-collection year and full ethics documentation were also absent. Future studies should use probability or stratified multistage sampling, report internal consistency in the analytic sample, measure relevant confounders, use multilevel models for school clustering, and examine adjustment longitudinally across the transition into and through senior secondary education. Qualitative interviews could clarify how stream choice, family expectations, gender norms, and institutional practices shape adjustment.

4. Conclusion

The study of 100 Class XI students (50 boys and 50 girls) revealed clear differences in emotional, social and educational adjustment. In emotional adjustment, 40% of boys and 32% of girls were in the unsatisfactory category, while 18% of boys and 36% of girls showed good adjustment. In social adjustment, 40% of boys compared with 26% of girls showed unsatisfactory adjustment. Educational adjustment was a common concern, with 42% of boys and 40% of girls falling in the unsatisfactory category. Overall, girls showed comparatively

better emotional and social adjustment, whereas educational adjustment requires attention among both groups. The findings support school-based counselling, academic guidance and socio-emotional support at the senior secondary level. Larger and more diverse samples are recommended to examine the combined influence of gender, academic stream and school environment.

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