

# Gender Difference In The Psychosocial Adjustment Factors Of Higher Secondary Students

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## Abstract

The present study aimed to find out the gender difference in the psychosocial adjustment factors of higher secondary students. Survey method with stratified random sampling technique has been followed for the present study. The Psychosocial Adjustment Scale constructed and validated by the investigator(2020) has been adapted to measure the psychosocial adjustment of higher secondary students. The total sample consists of 679 higher secondary students which include 382 male and 297 female higher secondary students. The present study revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female higher secondary students in the psychosocial adjustment factors such as, mental health, depression, self esteem, self concept, anxiety, self confidence, emotion and socio-economic status. The study further revealed that the male and female students differ significantly in the total psychosocial adjustment and psychosocial adjustment factors such as, social support and social adaptation. The female students have high level of social support, social adaptation and the total psychosocial adjustment than the male higher secondary students.

KEYWORDS: students-gender difference-psychosocial adjustment factors.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Psychosocial adjustment refers to people's capacity to adapt to the environment, which implies that the individual has sufficient

mechanisms to feel good, integrate, respond adequately to the demands of the environment, and achieve his or her objectives. Psychosocial adjustment factors involve both psychological and social variables which influence various aspects of student's behaviour and development. Conley, Travers and Bryant (2013) describes the various dimensions of psychosocial adjustment factors. These psychosocial adjustment factors are:

**Mental Health:** Mental health is a basic factor that contributes to the maintenance of physical health as well as social effectiveness. The role of mental health in human life is very important as it plays its role not only in the lives of individual, but also in the life of societies. There is no area of human life which is beyond the range of mental health.

**Depression:** Depression is a common but serious mental illness typically marked by sad or anxious feelings. Most students occasionally feel sad or anxious, but these emotions usually pass quickly within a couple of days. Untreated depression lasts for a long time and interferes with day-to-day activities. Depression in adolescence frequently co-occurs with other disorders such as anxiety, disruptive behavior, eating disorders, or substance abuse. It can also lead to increased risk for suicide

**Self Esteem:** Self-esteem is the primitive human psychological need. It reflects the desire of individuals to realize their own potential, continue to grow and be creative. There are two aspects in self-esteem. Persons with high self-esteem are desirable personalities. Persons with low self-esteem are undesirable personalities. People with high self-esteem do better in school and find it easier to deal with mistakes, disappointments, and failures, and are more likely to stick with something until they succeed.

**Self-Concept:** Psychologists Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow were the first to establish the notion of self-concept. According to Rogers, everyone strives to reach an "ideal self". Rogers also hypothesized that psychologically healthy people actively move away from roles. Self-concept is an important concept of any child's development. As children develop a sense of self and interact with and gain experience in the world, their self-concept is affected.

**Anxiety:** Anxiety is a state of intense apprehension or worry often accompanied by physical symptoms such as shaking, intense feelings in the gut, etc, common in mental illness or after a very distressing experience. Anxiety may occur without a cause, or it may occur based on a real situation but may be out of proportion to what would normally be expected. Severe anxiety can have a serious impact on daily life. Anxiety refers to the kind of vague irrational fear which prevents students from doing well in their academic activities.

**Self Confidence:** The self confidence means a feeling of trust in one's abilities, qualities, and judgment. Confidence helps us to feel ready for life's experiences. When we are confident, we are more likely to move forward with people and opportunities-not back away from them. It is opposite when confidence is low. People who low on confidence might be less likely to try new things or reach out to new people.

**Emotions:** Emotion can be defined as a complex process involving stirred-up feeling, physiological changes and certain impulses to do something within a psychological setting either consciously or unconsciously. Emotions play a prominent role in human life. They can perform many functions. They can provide motivating bases for all our actions. They can be biologically adaptive and act as protective mechanism as when a frightened person runs away from a source of danger. They can be also a source of happiness and misery. Proper sublimation, restraint and control of emotions can be not only the best part of a person's education but also his refinement and culture.

**Social Support:** Social support can generally be defined as the availability and dependability that a person gets from people closely associated with him, people who believe they belong to a social network of communication and mutual obligation experience social support. Social support is the buffering agency which facilitates a person to pace with the life changes and stresses in a better way and promote adaptability. It is commonly seen that a person who does not get sufficient social support is affected negatively.

**Social Adaptation:** Social adaptation is considered one of the important issues directly linked to human behavior, which is in

turn a reaction of an individual trying to achieve harmonization of his motives and needs on one hand, and the requirements of the environment and the different circumstances in the other hand; so he cares about the positive actions that brings satisfaction and leads to more social acceptance, and therefore the ability to adapt in different life situations.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Socioeconomic status is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008). In other words, socioeconomic status indicates one's access to collectively desired resources, be they material goods, money, power, friendship networks, healthcare, leisure time, or educational opportunities, and it is access to such resources that enable individuals and/or groups to prosper in the social world.

## **2. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

All the psychosocial factors are considered to be of great importance in the achievement of the higher secondary students. During the higher secondary level, the students' academic achievement is supposed to be based on the psychological and sociological factors. The various researches conducted both in India and other countries indicated that the psychosocial adjustment factors are significantly correlated with the students' academic achievement.

Gender is a social construct that impacts attitudes, roles, responsibilities and behavior patterns of boys and girls, men and women in all societies. Gender relations vary from society to society. It is a women's issue shaped by power relations in multicultural societies like India. It deals with human concerns encompassing diversities and differences. It has been the most endemic form of discrimination operating across cultures in developed and developing societies. Education has the inbuilt potential of initiating social change in the context of gender relations. The better balancing of male and female, teachers from nursery through graduate school, would provide models of both sexes with whom students might identify. Proper efforts can be made for the desired care to develop psychosocial adjustment for the students.

An overview of the main assumptions and types of

research undertaken by feminist research on education, including the analysis that have incorporated, along with gender other social factors as well, such as, class, race, ethnicity, disability etc. (Berger and Guidroz,2009, Dill and Zambrana,2009;Lykke,2010, University of Illinois (2008). Girls more likely than boys to struggle with social behavior, academic needs. The more failing grades students have during eighth grade, the more likely they are to experience social emotional learning problems, academic difficulties and behavioural problems during their freshman year in high school, researcher found in a new study and despite the gender stereotype that boys are more likely to be the problem children in school, the researchers found that girls constitute the majority of youth who struggled the most academically, socially and behaviourily. Mishra (2014) found out that there was no significant difference in the teaching aptitude and attitude of male and female M.Ed. students. It further reveals that there was significant difference in the level of anxiety of male and female M.Ed. students. Male M.Ed. students had higher level of anxiety as compared to female students.Bhat (2014) found that the adolescent boys have significantly lower psychosocial competence compared to adolescent girls. The study conducted by Gnanadevan,R. and Sivakuar,G.(2015) revealed that the male and female students studying in Adi-dravidar welfare schools differ significantly in the withdrawn, somatic complaints, anxious or depression problem, aggressive behaviour, academic problem, internalizing problem, externalizing problem and total social, emotional and behaviour problem. The withdrawn, somatic complaints, anxious or depression problem, internalizing problem, and total social, emotional and behaviour problem is high for the female students than the male students. But the aggressive behaviour, academic problem and externalizing problem is high for the male than the female students. Kaur and Simmi (2015) found out that there is no significant difference in boys and girls on all the measured variables i.e. anxiety and socio-economic status. The findings of the study further revealed relationship between anxiety and socio-economic status. The study conducted by Anbarasan,E. and Gnanadevan,R.(2020) revealed that the boys and girls belongs to average learner differ in their social and emotional problem. It further indicates that the social and emotional problem is high for the male than the female students.

The present study will be useful for the students as well as teachers, because the knowledge about gender difference in psychosocial factors will enable the teachers and policymakers to plan teaching and learning process keeping in view of these factors. The present study will provide an insight to the parents to deal effectively with their children, so that they will be able to develop an understanding of the importance of psychosocial adjustment factors with respect to gender and also proper training and guidance may be given to the children accordingly to develop their psychosocial adjustment.

Based on the above discussion the investigator felt it necessary to find out the gender difference in the psychosocial adjustment factors of higher secondary students.

## **2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The objective of the study is to find out the significant difference between male and female higher secondary students in the mean scores of following dimensions of psychosocial adjustment:

- a. Mental Health
- b. Depression
- c. Self Esteem
- d. Self Concept
- e. Anxiety
- f. Self Confidence
- g. Emotion
- h. Social Support,
- i. Social Adaptation
- j. Socio Economic Status and
- k. Total Psychosocial Adjustment

## **4. METHOD OF STUDY**

Survey method is a method for collecting and analysing data, obtained from large number of respondents respecting specific population collected through highly structured and detailed tool. This method is useful for development studies where the current problems and described at present. Hence, survey method has been employed for the present study. The Psychosocial Adjustment Scale constructed and validated by the investigator(2020) has been adapted to measure the psychosocial adjustment of higher secondary students. It is a Likert's type five point scale and it includes the ten dimensions

of psychosocial adjustment such as, mental health, depression, self-esteem, self-concept, anxiety, self-confidence, emotion, social support, social adaptation and socio-economic status. For the present study eleven schools in the Vellore District of Tamilnadu have been selected randomly by lottery method to collect data. For the selection of the sample from the selected schools, the stratified random sampling technique has been followed. The sample consists of students studying higher secondary in selected schools. The higher secondary students refers to the students studying 2 years of 'Higher Secondary Education' provided in higher secondary schools affiliated by higher secondary board, Government of Tamilnadu. The total sample consists of 679 students which include 382 male and 297 female higher secondary students.

#### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The 't' test has been carried out to compare the male and female higher secondary students in the mean scores of different dimensions of psychosocial adjustment. The result of the analysis is presented in table 1.

**Table- 1 Mean Difference between Male and Female Students in the Different Dimensions of Psychosocial Adjustment**

Dimensions of Psychosocial Adjustment	Male(N=382)		Female(N=297)		't' Value
	M	SD	M	SD	
Mental Health	30.99	7.81	31.84	8.17	1.45
Depression	17.35	4.90	18.42	5.24	1.64
Self Esteem	24.30	4.53	24.92	4.82	0.28
Self-concept	34.80	6.53	35.65	6.29	1.74
Anxiety	29.36	6.21	29.93	6.07	0.69
Self Confidence	31.07	5.76	31.72	5.58	0.95
Emotion	35.07	6.36	36.71	5.85	1.28
Social Support	35.82	7.69	37.56	6.43	4.50**
Social Adaptation	27.92	5.79	29.51	5.14	3.54**
Socio-Economic Status	20.49	4.50	21.32	4.14	1.52
Total Psychosocial Adjustment	287.15	39.09	297.58	34.04	1.96*

Note: \* indicates significant at 0.05 level, \*\* indicates significant

at 0.01 level

### **Gender Difference in the Mean Mental Health Scores of Higher Secondary Students**

Table-1 shows the mean difference between male and female higher secondary students in the mental health scores and it is found to be 1.45, which is not significant at 0.05 level. Hence, it is concluded that the male and female higher secondary students do not differ significantly in the level of mental health.

### **Gender Difference in the Mean Depression Scores of Higher Secondary Students**

Table-1 shows the mean difference between male and female higher secondary students in the depression scores and it is found to be 1.64, which is not significant at 0.05 level. Hence, it is concluded that the male and female higher secondary students do not differ significantly in the level of depression.

### **Gender Difference in the Mean Self Esteem Scores of Higher Secondary Students**

Table-1 shows the mean difference between male and female higher secondary students in the self esteem scores and it is found to be 0.28, which is not significant at 0.05 level. Hence, it is concluded that the male and female higher secondary students do not differ significantly in the level of self esteem.

### **Gender Difference in the Mean Self Concept Scores of Higher Secondary Students**

Table-1 shows the mean difference between male and female higher secondary students in the self concept scores and it is found to be 1.74 which is not significant at 0.05 level. Hence, it is concluded that the male and female higher secondary students do not differ significantly in the level of self concept.

### **Gender Difference in the Mean Anxiety Scores of Higher Secondary Students**

Table-1 shows the mean difference between male and female higher secondary students in the anxiety scores and it is found to be 0.69 which is not significant at 0.05 level. Hence, it is concluded that the male and female higher secondary students do not differ significantly in the level of anxiety.



### **Gender Difference in the Mean Self Confidence Scores of Higher Secondary Students**

Table-1 shows the mean difference between male and female higher secondary students in the self confidence scores and it is found to be 0.95 which is not significant at 0.05 level. Hence, it is concluded that the male and female higher secondary students do not differ significantly in the level of self confidence.

### **Gender Difference in the Mean Emotions Scores of Higher Secondary Students**

Table-1 shows the mean difference between male and female higher secondary students in the emotions scores and it is found to be 1.28 which is not significant at 0.05 level. Hence, it is concluded that the male and female higher secondary students do not differ significantly in the level of emotions.

### **Gender Difference in the Mean Social Support Scores of Higher Secondary Students**

Table-1 shows the mean difference between male and female higher secondary students in the social support scores and it is found to be 4.50 which is significant at 0.05 level. Hence, it is concluded that the male and female higher secondary students differ significantly in the level of social support. The mean value indicated that the level of social support is high for the female students than the male students.

### **Gender Difference in the Mean Social Adaptation Scores of Higher Secondary Students**

Table-1 shows the mean difference between male and female higher secondary students in the social adaptation scores and it is found to be 3.54 which is significant at 0.05 level. Hence, it is concluded that the male and female higher secondary students differ significantly in the level of social adaptation. The mean value indicated that the level of social adaptation is high for the female students than the male students.

### **Gender Difference in the Mean Socio-economic status Scores of Higher Secondary Students**

Table-1 shows the mean difference between male and female higher secondary students in the socio-economic status scores and it is found to be 1.52 which is not significant at 0.05 level.

Hence, it is concluded that the male and female higher secondary students do not differ significantly in the level of socio-economic status.

### **Gender Difference in the Mean Total Psychosocial Adjustment Scores of Higher Secondary Students**

Table-1 shows the mean difference between male and female higher secondary students in the total psychosocial adjustment scores and it is found to be 1.96 which is significant at 0.05 level. Hence, it is concluded that the male and female higher secondary students differ significantly in the level of socio-economic status. The mean value indicated that the level of socio-economic status is high for the female students than the male students.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

The present study indicated that there is no gender difference in the psychosocial adjustment factors such as, mental health, depression, self esteem, self concept, anxiety, self confidence, emotion and socio-economic status. But there is gender difference in the total psychosocial adjustment and also the psychosocial adjustment factors such as, social support and social adaptation. The study further indicated that the female students have high level of social support, social adaptation and the total psychosocial adjustment than the male higher secondary students. Social support and social adaptation is considered one of the important issues directly linked to human behavior, which is in turn a reaction of an individual trying to achieve harmonization of his motives and needs on one hand, and the requirements of the environment and the different circumstances in the other hand; so he cares about the positive actions that brings satisfaction and leads to more social acceptance, and therefore the ability to adapt in different life situations. The students of today are the youth of tomorrow, future citizens and pillars of the nation. They are the backbone of the educational process. Education is a process and it acts as an instrument to bring out the innate behaviour of the individual. Therefore, proper development and growth of the students should be ensured even at the earliest stage.

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