

Nurturing Social Adjustment in Adolescence: Key influencing Factors and Collaborative Interventions

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Abstract

Social Adjustment is a cornerstone of healthy adolescent development, enabling students to build meaningful relationships, adapt to school environments, and participate fully in academic and social life. This thematic paper reviews existing literature to identify the key factors influencing social adjustment among secondary school students, highlighting both positive facilitators and critical barriers. The review shows that supportive families, positive peer relationships, a healthy school environment, and emotional well-being promote better social adjustment, while family conflicts, stress, bullying, poor economic conditions, and excessive use of social media can negatively affect it. The paper concludes that schools, families, and communities should work together to improve students' social adjustment through guidance, counselling, inclusive education, and socio-emotional learning.

Keywords: Adolescence, Family Environment, Peer Relationships, School Climate, Social Adjustment

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I. Introduction

Social adjustment is one of the most significant aspects of human development that enables individuals to interact effectively with others and adapt successfully to their social environment. It is a continuous process through which a person develops appropriate attitudes, behaviours, and relationships that facilitate harmonious living within society. For secondary school students, social adjustment plays a crucial role in determining their academic performance, emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, and overall personality development. Mondal (2021) analysed the level of Social Adjustment among adolescent school learners. Adolescence, which corresponds to the secondary school stage, is characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes. During this period, students encounter new experiences, responsibilities, expectations, and challenges that require effective adjustment to various social situations.

Schools serve as one of the most influential social institutions where students learn not only academic concepts but also social values, cooperation, communication skills, leadership qualities, empathy, tolerance, and responsible citizenship. A socially adjusted student is generally able to establish healthy relationships with teachers, classmates, family members, and the wider community. Such students usually demonstrate confidence, emotional stability, cooperation, respect for others, and effective problem-solving abilities. In contrast, poor social adjustment may lead to loneliness, anxiety, behavioural problems, peer rejection, academic difficulties, low self-esteem, and reduced participation in school activities.

Social adjustment is influenced by numerous interrelated factors. Personal characteristics such as personality traits, self-concept, emotional intelligence, resilience, communication skills, and coping strategies significantly determine an individual's ability to adjust socially. Shyamaraja and Kochrekar (2024) investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and Social Adjustment among adolescent students. Family also plays a vital role by providing emotional security, parental guidance, discipline, affection, and opportunities for healthy social interaction. Parenting style, family relationships, parental education, and the home environment substantially influence children's social development.

The school environment is another major determinant of social adjustment. According to Jelsy and Vijin Das (2024) titled "Strategies to Overcome Emotional and Social Adjustment Problems among Hostel Students to Maintain Mental Health" explores how hostel students face emotional, social, and psychological adjustment challenges during their transition to independent living. Positive teacher-student relationships, supportive classroom climate, inclusive educational practices, co-curricular activities, and effective guidance and counselling services create favourable conditions for developing social competence. Jayasree and Swarupa Rani (2020) investigate the relationship between Social Adjustment and social maturity among adolescents

Similarly, peer relationships become increasingly important during adolescence. Acceptance by peers, friendship quality, peer support, and participation in group activities promote healthy social adjustment, whereas bullying, peer pressure, social exclusion, and conflicts negatively affect students' adjustment.

Socio-economic and cultural factors also influence social adjustment. Students from supportive socio-economic backgrounds often have greater access to educational resources, extracurricular opportunities, and positive learning environments. Mohanta (2022) explores the essential role of Social Adjustment in human survival and functioning within society. On the other hand, economic hardships, family stress, social inequality, and limited educational opportunities may create adjustment difficulties. Cultural values, community expectations, religious beliefs, and social norms further shape students' attitudes, behaviours, and interpersonal relationships.

In the contemporary digital era, technology and social media have become additional factors influencing social adjustment. Moderate and purposeful use of digital technology can enhance communication, collaboration, and access to information. Kumari and Jyoti (2023) explored the relationship between social skills and Social Adjustment among Secondary School Students. However, excessive screen time, social media addiction, cyberbullying, and reduced face-to-face interaction may adversely affect students' social skills and interpersonal relationships.

Understanding the factors influencing social adjustment has become increasingly important in modern education because students' success depends not only on academic achievement but also on their ability to adapt socially and emotionally. Vidya, Manjunatha and Surma (2022) investigated the level of Social Adjustment among pre-university students in Bangalore, India. Educational institutions are therefore expected to promote holistic development by addressing students' social, emotional, and psychological needs along with academic learning. Teachers, parents, counsellors, and school administrators share the responsibility of creating supportive environments that foster positive social adjustment.

This paper reviews existing literature on the various factors influencing social adjustment among secondary school students. It aims to identify the major determinants of social adjustment, analyse their educational significance, and highlight implications for educational practice. The review is expected to provide valuable insights for researchers, educators, counsellors, and policymakers in designing effective strategies to enhance students' social adjustment and overall development.

Concept of Social Adjustment

Social adjustment is the process through which individuals adapt their behaviour, emotions, and attitudes to maintain harmonious relationships with others and function effectively in society. It enables individuals to meet social expectations while ensuring personal well-being. During adolescence, social adjustment becomes especially important as students experience significant physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes. Ghatak (2021) examines the Social Adjustment capacities of adolescents and how these capacities influence their behaviour and personality development.

In the educational context, social adjustment refers to a student's ability to interact positively with teachers, peers, and family members while following accepted social norms. Socially adjusted students demonstrate cooperation, empathy, emotional stability, effective communication, and responsible behaviour, which contribute to academic success and overall personality development.

Social adjustment is influenced by several factors, including personality, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, family environment, parenting style, school climate, teacher-student relationships, peer acceptance, socio-economic conditions, and cultural values. Schools and families play a crucial role in promoting healthy social adjustment by providing supportive, inclusive, and emotionally secure environments.

In the digital era, technology also influences social adjustment. While responsible use of technology enhances communication and learning, excessive social media use, cyberbullying, and reduced face-to-face interaction may negatively affect students' social skills.

Thus, social adjustment is a multidimensional concept essential for students' academic achievement, emotional well-being, and holistic development. It helps adolescents develop healthy relationships and become responsible members of society.

Personal Factors Influencing Social Adjustment

Personal factors significantly influence the social adjustment of secondary school students by shaping how they perceive themselves, interact with others, and respond to social situations. During adolescence, characteristics such as personality, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, communication skills, resilience, and social competence play a vital role in successful adjustment.

Students with positive personality traits, high self-esteem, and emotional stability are more likely to develop healthy relationships and adapt effectively to different social environments. Emotional intelligence helps students understand and manage their emotions, show empathy, and resolve conflicts, while effective communication skills promote cooperation and meaningful interpersonal relationships. Resilience enables

students to cope with academic and social challenges, and social competence enhances peer acceptance and teamwork.

Good physical and mental health, along with positive attitudes, motivation, and adaptive coping strategies, further support successful social adjustment. Conversely, low self-esteem, poor emotional regulation, anxiety, and behavioural problems may hinder students' ability to adjust. Packiaselvi and Malathi (2017) suggested that background variables do not strongly influence students' social adjustment or academic outcomes, pointing instead to engagement and personal development as key factors.

Overall, personal factors provide the foundation for social adjustment. Therefore, schools should strengthen students' self-esteem, emotional intelligence, resilience, communication skills, and social competence through guidance, life skills education, and socio-emotional learning programmes.

Family Factors Influencing Social Adjustment

Family is the first and most influential social institution in a child's life. It plays a vital role in shaping social adjustment by providing emotional security, guidance, discipline, affection, and opportunities for social interaction. A supportive family environment promotes confidence, empathy, cooperation, and emotional stability, while an unsupportive home environment may lead to adjustment difficulties.

Parenting style is a major determinant of social adjustment. Democratic or authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth, consistent discipline, and open communication, helps children develop positive social skills and emotional maturity. In contrast, authoritarian, neglectful, or overly permissive parenting may negatively affect self-esteem and social competence. Mathil (2020) explores how family structure influences the social adjustment of adolescents. The study highlights that adolescents from different family setups such as nuclear, joint, or single-parent families exhibit varied social adjustment behaviours due to differences in emotional support, discipline, and family interaction patterns. A supportive family environment plays a vital role in developing emotional stability, adaptability, and positive social relationships during adolescence.

Parental support and involvement also enhance students' social adjustment by encouraging communication, providing emotional support, and participating in their educational and social development. Family environment, parental education, socio-economic status, and healthy family communication further influence students' ability to build positive relationships and cope with social challenges. Family conflict, neglect, financial stress, and lack of emotional support can hinder effective adjustment.

Overall, family factors play a significant role in promoting social adjustment among secondary school students. Positive parenting, emotional security, healthy communication, and active parental involvement contribute to the development of socially competent, emotionally balanced, and well-adjusted individuals.

School Factors Influencing Social Adjustment

School is a major social institution that significantly influences students' social adjustment by providing opportunities for interaction with teachers, classmates, and the wider school community. A positive school climate helps students develop communication skills, cooperation, leadership, responsibility, and respect for others.

A safe, inclusive, and supportive school environment promotes emotional security and a sense of belonging, while discrimination or an unfriendly atmosphere may lead to isolation and poor adjustment. Teacher-student relationships are also crucial, as supportive and empathetic teachers enhance students' confidence, participation, and social competence.

Classroom practices such as group discussions, cooperative learning, and active participation encourage teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills. Participation in co-curricular and extracurricular activities further strengthens leadership, self-confidence, friendship, and social belonging. Guidance and counselling services help students manage emotional difficulties, resolve conflicts, and cope with academic stress.

Fair discipline and inclusive educational practices also promote responsible behaviour, empathy, acceptance, and social harmony. Overall, school factors play a vital role in developing socially competent, emotionally balanced, and well-adjusted students.

Peer Factors Influencing Social Adjustment

Peer relationships play a vital role in the social adjustment of secondary school students, as adolescents spend much of their time interacting with classmates and friends. These interactions influence their behaviour, attitudes, emotional well-being, communication skills, and social competence.

Peer acceptance enhances students' self-confidence, sense of belonging, and participation in academic and co-curricular activities, while peer rejection may lead to loneliness, low self-esteem, and social anxiety. Positive friendships provide emotional support, trust, empathy, and cooperation, helping students manage stress and adapt effectively to social situations. Similarly, peer support promotes resilience, collaboration, and healthy interpersonal relationships.

Peer pressure can have both positive and negative effects. Positive peer influence encourages responsible behaviour and academic engagement, whereas negative peer pressure may lead to indiscipline, risky behaviours, and poor social adjustment. Bullying and victimization, including cyberbullying, can adversely affect students' emotional well-being and social relationships. Participation in group activities and collaborative learning further develops teamwork, leadership, communication, and conflict-resolution skills. Asher and McDonald (2009) establish that early peer rejection serves as a highly reliable predictor of later academic and socio-emotional maladjustment. Their longitudinal synthesis demonstrates that children and adolescents who experience persistent peer avoidance struggle to develop healthy conflict-resolution mechanisms, locking them into cycles of loneliness and relational anxiety that persist into adulthood.

Overall, positive peer relationships contribute significantly to healthy social adjustment, while peer rejection, bullying, and negative peer influence hinder students' social and emotional development. Therefore, schools and families should encourage supportive peer interactions and foster a safe and inclusive environment for adolescents.

Psychological Factors Influencing Social Adjustment

Psychological factors significantly influence the social adjustment of secondary school students by affecting their emotions, behaviour, self-perception, and interactions with others. During adolescence, positive psychological well-being promotes healthy relationships and social competence, while psychological difficulties may hinder effective adjustment.

Emotional stability enables students to manage stress, regulate emotions, and maintain positive relationships with peers and teachers. A positive self-concept enhances confidence, participation, and interpersonal skills, whereas a negative self-concept may lead to insecurity and social withdrawal. Good mental health also supports students in coping with academic and social challenges, while anxiety, depression, and stress can negatively affect social adjustment.

Effective coping strategies, resilience, and motivation help students overcome challenges, adapt to changing situations, and maintain emotional well-being. Empathy promotes kindness, cooperation, and conflict resolution, while sound decision-making and problem-solving skills enable students to handle interpersonal issues responsibly.

Sankhala (2019) discusses how individuals adapt to social norms and values to achieve harmony and mental health. It defines Social Adjustment as a psychological process involving perception, impression formation, stress management, and social influence through imitation, conformity, and obedience. Author also explains psychological wellbeing as a person's evaluation of life satisfaction and emotional balance, influenced by factors such as personality, environment, and social relationships.

Overall, psychological factors such as emotional stability, self-concept, mental health, resilience, empathy, and effective coping skills are essential for successful social adjustment. Therefore, schools should promote students' psychological well-being through guidance and counselling, life skills education, and socio-emotional learning programmes.

Socio-economic Factors Influencing Social Adjustment

Socio-economic factors influence the social adjustment of secondary school students by affecting their educational opportunities, living conditions, and social experiences. Family income, parental education, parental occupation, and access to educational resources play an important role in developing students' confidence, communication skills, and interpersonal relationships.

Students from financially stable and supportive families generally have better access to quality education, extracurricular activities, and healthcare, which promote positive social adjustment. In contrast, economic hardship, limited resources, and low parental involvement may create stress and hinder social development. Safe neighbourhoods, community facilities, and cultural values also contribute to students' social competence and adjustment. Chaturvedi and Kumar (2025) conducted a comparative analysis of secondary school students and established a significant positive correlation between a higher socioeconomic status and advanced social adjustment metrics.

Overall, socio-economic factors significantly shape students' social behaviour and relationships. Therefore, schools should promote equality, inclusiveness, and equal educational opportunities while providing support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Technological Factors Influencing Social Adjustment

Technology has greatly influenced the social adjustment of secondary school students by changing the way they communicate, learn, and interact. Appropriate use of smartphones, the internet, and digital learning platforms improves communication, collaborative learning, access to information, and social networking, thereby supporting positive social adjustment.

However, excessive use of social media and digital devices may reduce face-to-face interactions, weaken communication skills, and increase social isolation. Problems such as cyberbullying, internet addiction, and unhealthy social comparison can negatively affect students' self-esteem, emotional well-being, and interpersonal relationships. Seo *et al.*, (2016) highlight this duality in their analysis of international student populations. Their research reveals that targeted social media usage significantly aids initial social adjustment by providing cultural continuity and easing loneliness.

Overall, technology has both positive and negative effects on social adjustment. Therefore, parents, teachers, and schools should encourage responsible and balanced use of technology while promoting digital literacy and healthy online behaviour to support students' social and emotional development.

Educational Implications

The findings of this paper have several important implications for educational practice, teacher education, school administration, and educational policy. Since social adjustment is closely associated with students' academic achievement, emotional well-being, and personality development, educational institutions should adopt comprehensive strategies to promote positive social adjustment among secondary school students.

1. **Strengthening Guidance and Counselling Services:** Schools should provide effective guidance and counselling programmes to help students cope with emotional, behavioural, academic, and social challenges. Professional counselling can improve students' self-confidence, interpersonal skills, and emotional well-being.
2. **Promoting Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL):** Schools should integrate socio-emotional learning into the curriculum to develop self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, communication skills, decision-making, and responsible social behaviour among students.
3. **Creating a Positive School Climate:** Educational institutions should maintain a safe, inclusive, supportive, and discrimination-free school environment where every student feels respected, accepted, and valued.
4. **Enhancing Teacher Competencies:** Teachers should receive training in adolescent psychology, classroom management, inclusive education, and socio-emotional development so that they can effectively support students' social adjustment.
5. **Encouraging Active Parental Involvement:** Schools should establish strong partnerships with parents through regular meetings, counselling sessions, and awareness programmes to promote positive parenting practices and healthy family relationships.
6. **Providing Opportunities for Co-curricular Participation:** Students should be encouraged to participate in sports, cultural programmes, debates, clubs, community service, and leadership activities that enhance cooperation, teamwork, confidence, and communication skills.
7. **Implementing Anti-bullying Programmes:** Schools should formulate clear anti-bullying policies and create awareness about respectful behaviour, empathy, and conflict resolution to ensure a safe learning environment.
8. **Promoting Responsible Use of Technology:** Digital literacy programmes should educate students about safe internet practices, cyberbullying prevention, balanced screen time, and responsible use of social media.
9. **Supporting Students from Diverse Backgrounds:** Schools should provide equal learning opportunities and additional academic, psychological, and financial support to students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds to ensure equitable social development.
10. **Strengthening Life Skills Education:** Life skills such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, emotional regulation, leadership, and interpersonal relationships should be integrated into school programmes to prepare students for successful personal and social lives.

Overall, these educational implications emphasize that promoting social adjustment requires the combined efforts of teachers, parents, school administrators, counsellors, and the wider community. A holistic educational approach can significantly contribute to the development of socially competent, emotionally balanced, and responsible individuals.

II. Conclusion

Social adjustment is a vital aspect of the holistic development of secondary school students. It enables adolescents to establish healthy interpersonal relationships, adapt successfully to different social environments, and participate effectively in academic and community life. Since adolescence is a period of rapid physical, emotional, psychological, and social changes, the ability to adjust positively becomes essential for ensuring emotional well-being, academic success, and responsible citizenship.

The present paper has highlighted that social adjustment is influenced by a wide range of interrelated factors. Personal characteristics such as personality, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, communication skills, and resilience form the foundation of social adjustment. Family-related factors, including parenting style, parental support, family environment, and communication, significantly shape students' social behaviour and emotional security. School-related factors such as school climate, teacher-student relationships, classroom environment, guidance services, and co-curricular activities provide opportunities for developing social competence and interpersonal skills.

The paper also demonstrates that peer relationships, psychological well-being, socio-economic conditions, and technological influences have a substantial impact on students' social adjustment. Positive friendships, emotional stability, supportive socio-economic conditions, and the responsible use of technology contribute to healthy social development. Conversely, bullying, family conflict, emotional distress, financial hardship, and excessive dependence on digital media may create barriers to successful social adjustment.

The analysis further indicates that social adjustment is not the responsibility of students alone. It requires the combined efforts of families, schools, teachers, counsellors, communities, and policymakers to create supportive environments that foster positive social development. Educational institutions should integrate socio-emotional learning, guidance and counselling services, inclusive educational practices, life skills education, and positive school climates into their regular programmes.

In conclusion, promoting social adjustment is essential for achieving the broader goals of education. Students who are socially well-adjusted are more likely to demonstrate confidence, empathy, cooperation, emotional stability, and academic excellence. Therefore, understanding and addressing the factors influencing social adjustment can contribute significantly to the development of competent, responsible, and socially responsible citizens capable of contributing positively to society. The findings of this paper may also serve as a valuable resource for educators, researchers, teacher educators, school administrators, and policymakers in designing effective interventions that enhance students' social adjustment and overall development.

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