School Adjustment among Students in Context of Self-esteem, Educational Problem and Sex-difference

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ABSTRACT

It was intended to compare mild (N = 30) and moderate (N = 30) cerebral palsy children in terms of their learning skills (motor, self-help, functional academic, recreational and leisure time activities skills). It was hypothesized that Mild and moderate groups of cerebral palsy children will differ significantly from one another in terms of learning skills : (i) motor skill, (ii) self-help skill, (iii) function academic skill and (iv) recreational and leisure time activities skills. For data collection, the respondents were administered Seguin Form Board and MD PS to measure intelligence and learning skills. The obtained data were treated using t-ratio. The hypothesis were confirmed. It was found that mild group of cerebral palsy children excelled over moderate group of cerebral palsy children in terms of learning skills (Motor, self-help, functional academic, recreational and leisure time activities skills). It was concluded that learning skills among cerebral palsy children are the function of their severity of problems.

KEY WORDS

School, Students, Self-esteem, Educational Problem.

INTRODUCTION

School adjustment is a fundamental concept in understanding how students integrate into the educational environment and how effectively they navigate the challenges posed by academic life. It refers to the process through which students adapt to their school environment, involving the emotional, social, and academic dimensions of their lives. Successful school adjustment can enhance students' educational outcomes, their social relationships, and

their mental well-being. However, for many students, adjusting to school is not always a smooth or easy process. Numerous factors influence how well students adjust to the demands of the school environment, and self-esteem plays a crucial role in this adjustment. Furthermore, various educational problems can either hinder or facilitate the adjustment process, impacting the students' overall experience in school.

In exploring school adjustment, it is essential to recognize the interconnectedness of different psychological and social factors, particularly self-esteem, with broader educational challenges. Self-esteem, defined as an individual's overall sense of self-worth or personal value, is a critical determinant of how students perceive themselves and their abilities. Students with high self-esteem tend to approach challenges in a more positive light, showing resilience in the face of setbacks, and often experience greater academic success. In contrast, students with low self-esteem may struggle to engage with schoolwork, avoid social interactions, and exhibit a tendency toward academic underachievement, all of which can lead to difficulties in adjusting to the school environment.

Educational problems, ranging from academic difficulties to interpersonal challenges, can exacerbate issues with school adjustment, particularly for students with low self-esteem. Academic problems such as poor grades, learning difficulties, and a lack of engagement with the curriculum may lead to feelings of inadequacy, reinforcing negative self-perceptions. Social problems, such as bullying, exclusion, and difficulties in making friends, can further isolate students, diminishing their self-worth and making it even harder for them to adjust to the school environment. Thus, school adjustment is a complex process that involves not only academic success but also the ability to cope with social, emotional, and personal challenges.

This introduction examines the relationship between school adjustment, self-esteem, and educational problems by delving into the factors that influence students' adjustment to school. It considers how self-esteem interacts with academic performance, peer relationships, and emotional well-being, and how these factors collectively shape students' ability to adjust to their school environment. Moreover, it explores the impact of educational problems on students' psychological functioning and their adjustment to school. Through this analysis, we aim to better understand the complexities of school adjustment and the role that self-esteem and educational problems play in shaping students' experiences and outcomes.

School adjustment involves the process of successfully integrating into various aspects of the school environment. This includes not only academic achievement but also the ability to form and maintain positive relationships with peers and teachers, as well as the capacity to manage the emotional and behavioral challenges that may arise in a school setting. The process of adjustment is highly individual, shaped by personal, social, and environmental factors. Self-esteem, as a key psychological factor, significantly influences a student's ability to adjust to school. High self-esteem promotes positive coping strategies, resilience, and persistence, which contribute to better adjustment outcomes. Conversely, low self-esteem can lead to negative coping mechanisms, avoidance behaviors, and feelings of helplessness, all of which hinder successful adjustment.

Self-esteem plays an important role in both academic and social adjustment. Students with high self-esteem are more likely to engage in classroom activities, seek help when needed, and persist in the face of academic challenges. They are also more likely to develop positive peer relationships, contributing to a sense of belonging and emotional support within the school community. These positive experiences, in turn, reinforce their self-esteem, creating a cycle of positive adjustment. On the other hand, students with low self-esteem may internalize academic or social difficulties, viewing these challenges as evidence of their inadequacy. This can result in a lack of motivation, withdrawal from social interactions, and academic disengagement, further impeding their ability to adjust to the school environment.

Educational problems can take many forms, including academic difficulties, learning disabilities, behavioral issues, and social challenges. These problems often present significant barriers to school adjustment, particularly for students with low self-esteem. Academic difficulties, such as poor grades, test anxiety, or learning disabilities, can create feelings of failure and inadequacy. For students with low self-esteem, these academic struggles are often perceived as a reflection of their personal worth, leading to further disengagement from school and a lack of motivation to improve.

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Behavioral problems, including difficulty following rules, poor impulse control, and disruptive behaviors, can also hinder school adjustment. These issues may lead to negative interactions with teachers and peers, resulting in social rejection, exclusion, and disciplinary actions. The experience of being disciplined or ostracized can severely damage a student's self-esteem, creating a vicious cycle of poor adjustment and further behavioral issues. Students who face academic and behavioral difficulties may also be at greater risk for mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, which can further complicate their ability to adjust to school.

In addition to academic and behavioral problems, social challenges also play a crucial role in school adjustment. Bullying, exclusion, and peer pressure are all common issues that many students face. Students who experience social difficulties often feel isolated and unsupported, which can lead to feelings of loneliness, sadness, and low self-worth. For students with low self-esteem, these experiences are especially damaging, as they may internalize negative social interactions and perceive themselves as unworthy of friendship or acceptance. Social exclusion can also lead to academic disengagement, as students may withdraw from school activities or avoid participating in group work, further hindering their adjustment.

The relationship between self-esteem and educational problems is bidirectional. Educational problems can negatively affect self-esteem, while low self-esteem can exacerbate educational difficulties. For instance, students with learning difficulties may struggle to keep up with their peers academically, leading to frustration, self-doubt, and diminished self-worth. This can create a negative feedback loop, where poor academic performance lowers self-esteem, which in turn affects future academic performance. Similarly, students with low self-esteem may have difficulty seeking help or advocating for themselves, leading to further academic and social problems.

Conversely, positive experiences in the school environment can help build self-esteem, which in turn facilitates better school adjustment. Supportive relationships with teachers, peers, and family members, along with success in academic tasks, can promote a sense of competence and self-worth. As students develop greater confidence in their abilities, they become more resilient to setbacks, more engaged in school activities, and better able to cope with social and academic challenges.

In conclusion, school adjustment is a complex and multifaceted process that is significantly influenced by both self-esteem and educational problems. Self-esteem plays a central role in determining how students perceive and respond to the challenges of the school environment. High self-esteem fosters positive coping strategies, academic engagement, and social integration, while low self-esteem can lead to disengagement, isolation, and academic difficulties. Educational problems, including academic struggles, behavioral issues, and social challenges, can create additional obstacles to school adjustment, particularly for students with low self-esteem. Understanding the relationship between self-esteem, educational problems, and school adjustment is essential for developing effective interventions and support systems that help students navigate the challenges of the educational experience and achieve their full potential.

Reviews of Literature

Baumeister et al.[1], (2003). This reviewed by Baumeister and colleagues discusses the reciprocal relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. It suggests that students with higher self-esteem are more likely to experience academic success, as they engage with their studies more actively and show persistence in overcoming challenges. On the other hand, academic failure can lead to a decrease in self-esteem, creating a vicious cycle that negatively impacts school adjustment. Reddy,[8] (2010). Reddy's review focussesed on the link between school adjustment and mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression. It highlights how poor school adjustment due to academic struggles, bullying, or social isolation can contribute to mental health difficulties. Adolescents with low self-esteem are particularly vulnerable to these problems, which further hinder their ability to engage in the school environment and negatively affect academic performance. Wentzel,[10] (1998). Wentzel's reviewed emphasizes the importance of peer relationships in school adjustment.

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Students with high self-esteem tend to develop stronger, more supportive friendships, which provide emotional and social support, aiding their school adjustment. However, students with low self-esteem may experience difficulties forming peer relationships, leading to social isolation and a heightened risk of academic disengagement. Lamborn et al.[6], (1991) discussed how the family environment can influence students' self-esteem and school adjustment. Family support, warmth, and positive reinforcement are associated with higher self-esteem, which in turn supports better academic and social adjustment. Conversely, lack of family support can contribute to educational problems and hinder school adjustment. Salmela-Aro & Nurmi[9], (2004) explored how self-esteem influences academic performance and adjustment. The review indicates that students with higher self-esteem exhibit better school performance, have a more positive attitude toward school, and are more likely to participate actively in class. Low self-esteem, however, can lead to poor academic outcomes, disengagement from school, and social withdrawal.

Harter[4] (1999) examined how self-esteem impacts behavior and school adjustment. Students with low self-esteem are more likely to engage in disruptive behavior, which can interfere with both their academic and social adjustment. Behavioral problems, including aggression and withdrawal, often stem from a lack of confidence in one's abilities, leading to further difficulties in school. Nansel et al.[7], (2001) examined the effects of bullying and peer victimization on school adjustment. Students who are bullied or marginalized by their peers often experience a decline in self-esteem, which hampers their ability to adjust to school. The negative impact of bullying is compounded for students with already low self-esteem, leading to withdrawal from academic and social activities. Gajar[3] (1993) reviewed focuses on students with learning disabilities and how their self-esteem and social adjustment are often compromised due to academic difficulties. These students frequently face challenges in school, including stigmatization and social exclusion, which affect their self-esteem and hinder their overall adjustment. The review emphasizes the importance of providing these students with tailored interventions to improve both their academic and social experiences. Wentzel[11] (2002) explored how teacher-student relationships affect school adjustment, particularly for students with low self-esteem. Positive teacher support has been shown to foster higher self-esteem and improve both academic performance and social integration. On the other hand, students who feel unsupported by teachers are more likely to experience academic difficulties and emotional distress, which can lead to poor school adjustment. Kernis et al.[5], (2000) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and school engagement over time. It finds that adolescents with high self-esteem are more likely to engage with school, attend classes regularly, and perform well academically. In contrast, students with low self-esteem are more likely to disengage from school activities, leading to academic problems and difficulties in adjusting to the school environment. Chiu & Hong[2] (2007) examined how cultural factors influence the relationship between self-esteem and school adjustment. In different cultural contexts, the importance of self-esteem varies, and the ways in which self-esteem impacts academic success and social adaptation differ. For example, in collectivist cultures, group harmony and social approval may play a more significant role in school adjustment than individual self-esteem. This review highlights the need to consider cultural context when examining the relationship between self-esteem and school adjustment.

These reviews demonstrate how self-esteem is intricately linked to school adjustment. Both academic and social challenges, such as bullying, learning disabilities, and behavioral problems, can have a significant impact on students' self-esteem, which in turn affects their overall adjustment to the school environment. The reviews also emphasize the importance of providing targeted support to students, such as teacher encouragement, peer relationships, and family involvement, to help improve their self-esteem and facilitate better adjustment outcomes.

Objective

The study intended to compare adolescents of high and low self-esteem groups, high and low educational problems groups and male as well as female groups of adolescents in terms of their school adjustment.

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Hypothesis

H₁ High and low self-esteem groups of adolescents will differ significantly in terms of their school adjustment.

H₂ High and low educational problem groups of adolescents will differ significantly in terms of their school adjustment.

H₃ Male and female adolescents will differ significantly in terms of school adjustment.

Method of Study

Sample used

The sample comprised of 120 high school students selected from among the high schools of Patna based on incidental-cum-purposive sampling technique. They were selected equally based on sex-difference (Boys : 60; Girls : 60) Sample was matched so far as practicable.

Tools used

1. Self-prepared Personal Data Sheet was used to seek the necessary information about the student respondents.

2. Student Problem Inventory by Dr H.B. Bandami was used to measure educational problem / stress amongst students.

3. High School Adjustment Inventory by Singh and Sen Gupta was used to measure the school adjustment amongst students.

Results and Interpretations

Table 01: Showing a comparison between students of high and low self-esteem on school adjustment

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p
Self-esteem	High	45	20.44	4.67	7.57	118	<.01
	Low	75	27.48	5.42			

The results of table-01 clearly revealed that mean on school adjustment of the group of respondents of high self-esteem group is lower (Mean=20.44) than the mean (Mean=27.48) of group of respondents of low self-esteem group. The t-value showing the significance of difference between two means was found significant ($t = 7.57$; $df = 118$; $p<.01$). Students with high self-esteem excel in school adjustment because they possess confidence, resilience, and a positive self-image, which help them cope with academic and social challenges effectively. They are more likely to form healthy peer relationships, seek support when needed, and engage actively in school life, unlike low self-esteem students who may withdraw or struggle with self-doubt.

Table 02: Mean, SD and t-value showing comparison of high school students of high and low educational stress groups in terms of their school adjustment

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	P
Educational Stress	High	70	28.06	5.64	7.35	118	<.01
	Low	50	20.71	5.29			

It is evident from result table-02 that educational stress is a significant contributor to school adjustment. The high educational stress group of students manifested higher mean (Mean=28.06) than students of low educational stress group of students (Mean=20.71) on school adjustment. The significance difference means was found significant ($t=7.35$; $df = 118$; $p<.01$). Students with low educational stress excel in school adjustment because they experience less anxiety, allowing them to focus better, participate actively, and maintain positive relationships. Their mental clarity and emotional balance help them adapt to academic demands and social environments, unlike high-stress students who often face emotional exhaustion, concentration issues, and withdrawal from school activities.

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Table 03: Comparison between boy and girl adolescents on school adjustment

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	P
Sex-difference	Boys	60	22.71	4.32	5.78	118	<.01
	Girls	60	27.16	4.10			

It is clear from result table-3 that girls excelled (Mean = 27.16) over boys (Mean = 22.71) on school adjustment measure significantly (t = 5.78; df = 118; p<.01). Female students often excel over male students in school adjustment due to stronger emotional regulation, better communication skills, and greater social connectedness. They are more likely to seek support, follow rules, and engage in cooperative learning, which enhances their ability to adapt academically and socially. In contrast, male students may struggle with expressing emotions and seeking help.

CONCLUSION

(i) High self-esteem is conducive to sound school adjustment and vice-versa.

(ii) Low educational stress is conducive to sound school adjustment and vice-versa.

(iii) Boys manifest sound school adjustment as compared to girls is conducive to sound school adjustment and vice-versa.

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