

## Socio-emotional Adjustment among higher secondary level Students: A Cross-sectional Study

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The purpose of the study was to see the socio-emotional adjustment of Higher secondary level students in Coochbehar District, West Bengal. Using a cross-sectional survey method, data was collected from 213 students with the social and emotional adjustment Scale namely "Bell's Adjustment Inventory" developed by R.K. Ojha (1968). Here to select the sample from the whole population convenient sampling Technique was followed. Female students possessed higher Socio-emotional adjustment as compared to male students. Furthermore, students belonging to nuclear families scored higher than their counterparts belonging to joint families. Social caste ST students have shown higher socio-emotional adjustment compared to OBC, SC, and General caste students, respectively. Father Educational qualification-wise, the Illiterate has shown higher socio-emotional adjustment compared to I -VIII, XI-XII, and IX-X. While differences among Gender and Social Caste were significant( $p < 0.05$ ); differences among family type and Father Educational qualification were not significant( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Keywords:** Socio-emotional adjustment, Higher Secondary students, Cross-Sectional Survey, Statistically Significant.

Adolescence is an important stage where students transition from adolescence to youth and make significant career decisions. This phase involves physical and mental maturity, strong likes and dislikes, adventurous behavior, and considerable peer influence. It is a period of rapid social expansion (Agubosi, 2003). This is the era of peer grouping, where adolescents spend most of their time with peers (OSA-Edoh & Iyamu, 2012). This stage is a period of storm and stress and identify it as a distinctive phase of life. Adolescents may face social and performance issues, leading to withdrawal and antisocial behavior (Bolarin, 1999 & Olayinka, 1997). Problems often relate to physical appearance, health, academic performance, and relationships with family, teachers, and peers. This maladjustment can result in absenteeism, truancy, and low achievement (Subramanyam, 1986). Adolescents face numerous challenges, and unresolved issues can lead to social misfits.

Successful adjustment fosters pride, self-satisfaction, motivation for future success, independent thinking, confidence, and mental health. It is also a time of various transitions, including education, employment, and living circumstances.

Adjustment refers to adapting to one's environment to meet physical, social, and psychological needs. Proper adjustment leads to a harmonious relationship with the environment, promoting mental health and happiness. Maladjustment, resulting from unmet needs, causes discontent and frustration. Education fosters adjustment, which is important for adolescent development (Monroe, 1990; Good, 1945). Social and emotional competence influences social-emotional adjustment in children, aiding successful peer relationships and school adaptation. Social adjustment involves relationships with family, friends, and school staff, while emotional adjustment maintains

equilibrium amid stressors. Key factors include fulfilling personal needs, self-acceptance, and developing skills. Learning and school behavior are crucial for overall adjustment (Cook, 1990; Huffines, 2002; Habit, 2003).

In the modern era, the adjustment process is essential in human life, touching all aspects of existence and expanding in scope daily (Mazaheri, Baghiyan, & Fatehizadeh, 2006). Social-emotional adjustment significantly influences academic achievement, with social adjustment being crucial (Hartup & Rubin, 2013). Social growth, acquired through relationships, indicates psychological health. The objective of adjustment is balancing personal desires with social expectations to achieve compatibility and happiness. Understanding and managing emotions is key to human development and is facilitated by cognitive processes (Berstein, 1975 & Vandal, 1981). Social adjustment positively impacts academic success and is influenced by various social factors (Dishion, 1990; Feschbach & Feschbach, 1987; Green, Forehand, Beck & Vosk, 1980). Social maturity, a non-cognitive factor, affects academic achievement. Education fosters healthy adjustment for present and future life situations, demonstrating the interlinkage between education and adjustment (Vandal, 1994). Schools make educational adjustments to help children learn, encompassing curriculum, co-curriculum, evaluation, health, moral values, culture, vocation, communication, and teaching.

### **Meaning and Concept of Socio-Emotional Adjustment**

Socio-emotional adjustment refers to the process by which individuals achieve a balanced state of emotional and social functioning. It encompasses the ability to manage emotions, develop healthy relationships, and navigate social

environments effectively (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). Socio-emotional adjustment is important for overall well-being and is often assessed through indicators such as emotional regulation, social skills, and behavioral adaptation (Denham, 2006).

Emotional regulation is a key component of socio-emotional adjustment, involving the ability to recognize, understand, and constructively manage one's emotions (Gross, 2002). Effective emotional regulation is associated with positive outcomes such as reduced stress, improved mental health, and better interpersonal relationships (John & Gross, 2004). Social skills, another critical aspect of socio-emotional adjustment, include the abilities to communicate effectively, empathize with others, and resolve conflicts (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). These skills are essential for forming and maintaining healthy relationships and for successful functioning in various social contexts (Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004).

Behavioral adaptation refers to the ability to adjust one's behavior in response to social norms and expectations (Achenbach, 1991). This involves exhibiting appropriate behaviors in different settings, such as at home, school, or work, and avoiding problematic behaviors that can lead to social or academic difficulties (Merrell, 2003). Socio-emotional adjustment is influenced by a variety of factors, including family environment, peer relationships, and individual characteristics (Berk, 2012). A supportive family environment, characterized by warmth, stability, and effective communication, can foster positive socio-emotional development (Cummings, Davies, & Campbell, 2000). Conversely, exposure to family conflict or instability can negatively impact socio-emotional adjustment (Davies & Cummings, 1994). Peer relationships also play a significant role in socio-emotional adjustment. Positive peer interactions can

provide support, enhance self-esteem, and promote social competence (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006). On the other hand, peer rejection or bullying can lead to social withdrawal, anxiety, and other adjustment problems (Ladd, 2005). Individual characteristics such as temperament, self-esteem, and coping strategies are important determinants of socio-emotional adjustment (Rothbart & Bates, 2006). For instance, children with a more adaptable and resilient temperament tend to cope better with stress and exhibit better socio-emotional adjustment (Thomas & Chess, 1977).

In educational settings, socio-emotional adjustment is critical for academic success and overall student well-being (Elias et al., 1997). Programs that promote socio-emotional learning (SEL) have been shown to enhance students' emotional and social competencies, leading to improved academic performance and reduced behavioral problems (Durlak et al., 2011).

### **Rationale of the Study**

The present study on socio-emotional adjustment among higher secondary level students is significant for various stakeholders in the education sector, including educational planners, administrators, teachers, parents, and society (Smith, 2020). This research emphasizes the importance of developing students' overall academic achievement and socio-emotional adjustment (Johnson, 2019). It focuses on enhancing students' achievement motivation and psychological and social adjustment levels (Brown, 2021). Encouraging parental involvement and increasing student learning levels in the classroom are essential components of this study (Lee, 2018). The research impacts school curricula and teaching methods, highlighting the critical role of socio-emotional adjustment in student achievement (Davis, 2017). Financial support for students is also

emphasized as a crucial factor in their adjustment and success (Martinez, 2016). The findings of this study are applicable across all developmental stages in West Bengal and can be extended to various types of children from different castes (Kumar, 2015). Educational institutions can utilize these results to boost children's academic achievement and socio-emotional adjustment, thereby creating a more supportive and effective learning environment (Patel, 2014).

### **Objectives**

The present study has undertaken to achieve the following objectives:

1. To find out the overall level of socio-emotional adjustment among higher secondary level students.
2. To explore the differences in Socio-emotional adjustment among Higher secondary level students based on gender.
3. To investigate how family type affects the Socio-emotional adjustment of students.
4. To determine if social caste influences students' Socio-emotional adjustment.
5. To explore if the father's educational qualification affects students' Socio-emotional adjustment.

### **Hypotheses**

In keeping with the problem formulated and objectives to be tested, the following hypotheses were proposed to be tested.

- H01: There is no significant difference in socio-emotional adjustment among higher secondary level students concerning their gender.
- H02: There is no significant difference in socio-emotional adjustment among higher secondary level students concerning their types of family.

H03: There is no significant difference in socio-emotional adjustment among higher secondary level students concerning their caste.

H04: There is no significant difference in socio-emotional adjustment among higher secondary level students concerning their educational qualification of father.

### Delimitations

The study was delimited in the following respects:

- The present study is delimited to the state of West Bengal.
- The study is restricted to 213 higher secondary level students as a sample.
- The study is delimited to only two schools in Coochbehar district in West Bengal.
- The schools are located in only rural areas of West Bengal.
- The study is delimited to only one dependent variable namely “Socio-emotional Adjustment”.
- The study is delimited to only four independent variables namely gender, caste, educational qualification of parents, and types of family.

### Method

#### Participants

The present research was a cross-sectional survey study. The researcher collected data from different schools under Coochbehar district in West Bengal. A sample of 213 (girls =133; boys =80) was selected from two different schools namely Ksheti High School and Fulbari High School in Coochbehar district. All the representatives were under higher secondary level students. Here to select the sample from the whole population, a convenient sampling Technique was followed.

### Tools

In this study to measure social and emotional adjustment, a standardized social and emotional adjustment Scale namely “Bell’s Adjustment Inventory” was developed by R.K. Ojha (1968). The inventory consists of 70 items with 2-point scale of Likert. The maximum possible score is ‘70’ and the minimum possible score is ‘0’. Scoring of the inventory is very easy. Number of responses is counted where the individual has Yes and No. The total number of ‘Yes’ scores thus make the total score of the individual in the part.

### Results

Table 1. Descriptive statistics regarding Socio-emotional adjustment of students

Variable	Category	Number of Students	Mean	SD
Gender	Male	80	30.50	7.419
	Female	133	34.93	7.711
Family Type	Joint	104	32.61	8.209
	Nuclear	109	33.90	7.545
Social Caste	General	53	32.26	7.865
	SC	126	32.77	7.990
	ST	26	37.04	6.890
Father Educational Qualification	OBC	10	35.50	6.547
	Illiterate	41	34.32	1.197
	I to VIII	90	33.20	.793
	IX to X	46	32.72	1.188
	XI to XII	36	32.94	1.493

This study examines the mean differences in Socio-emotional adjustment among Secondary level students in the Coochbehar district, West Bengal, across four independent variables. Gender female students have shown higher socio-emotional adjustment scores (34.93) than male

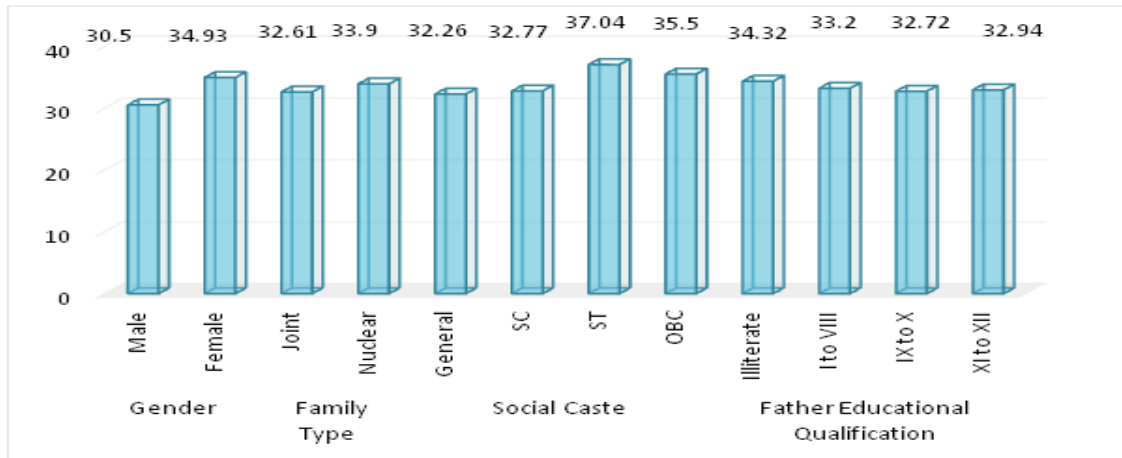


Figure 1. Mean differences in Socio-emotional adjustment based on each independent variable.

students (30.50). For Family type, nuclear family students demonstrated higher socio-emotional adjustment scores (33.90) compared to Joint family students (32.61). Social caste ST students had higher socio-emotional adjustment scores (37.04) than

OBC (35.50), SC (32.77), and General (32.26). Father educational qualification-wise illiterate (34.32) had higher socio-emotional adjustment power than I to VII (33.20), XI to XII (32.94), and IX to X (32.72) respectively.

Table 2. Inferential statistics were conducted based on hypotheses H01 to H04

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	t	df	Std.error Diff.	p-value	Remarks	Hypotheses Testing (95%)
Socio-emotional adjustment	Gender	-4.120	211	1.076	.000	Significant	Rejected
	Family Type	1.198	211	1.080	.232	Not Significant	Failed to Reject
Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	f	df	Mean square	p-value	Remarks	Hypotheses Testing (95%)
Socio-emotional adjustment	Social Caste	2.714	3,209	62.159	.046	Significant	Rejected
	Father Educational Qualification	.336	3,209	62.749	.799	Not Significant	Filed to Reject

As shown in Table 2, the gender-based t-value for Socio-emotional adjustment is -4.120 ( $p=.000$ ). The p-value is less than 0.05, so, there is a statistically significant difference in the means. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H01) is rejected, indicating that the observed differences are likely

coincidental. Table 2 indicates that the t-value for Socio-emotional adjustment based on family type is 1.198 ( $p=.232$ ). the p-value is greater than 0.05. So, the mean difference is not statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H02) fails to reject, suggesting that the differences are not due

to random chance. According to Table 2, the f-value for Socio-emotional adjustment based on social caste is 2.214 with a p-value of .046. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, there is a statistically significant difference in the means. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H03) is rejected, implying that the differences are likely coincidental. Table 2 shows that the f-value for emotional intelligence based on the current class is .336 and  $p = .799$ . Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, there is no statistically significant difference in the means. Hence, the null hypothesis (H04) is not rejected, indicating that the observed differences are likely due to random chance.

### Major Findings

- No significant difference was found between male and female students of higher secondary level students concerning their socio-emotional adjustment. Hence it concluded that gender had no impact on socio-emotional adjustment.
- No significant difference was found between joint family and nuclear family of the students of higher secondary level concerning their socio-emotional adjustment. Hence it concluded that types of family had no impact on socio-emotional adjustment.
- Significant difference was found between general, SC, ST, and OBC of the students of higher secondary level students concerning their socio-emotional adjustment. Hence it concluded that caste had an impact on socio-emotional adjustment.
- No significant difference was found between Illiterate, I to VIII, IX to X, and XI to XII of the students of higher secondary level to their socio-emotional adjustment. Hence it concluded that the educational qualification of the father

had no impact on socio-emotional adjustment.

### Discussion

Socio-emotional adjustment is important in the present world, impacting many areas. In workplaces, it enhances teamwork, leadership, and job performance, with good leaders fostering positive environments. The rise of remote work has shown the importance of understanding emotions in communication. Schools emphasize socio-emotional adjustment in their programs to improve academic performance, relationships, and well-being. In healthcare, it is key for good communication and empathy between patients and doctors, especially in tough times. Overall, socio-emotional adjustment is essential for success in work, education, healthcare, and personal relationships, highlighting its importance in our connected society.

The study discovered that female students had higher socio-economic levels, Consistent with research female students tend to report higher levels of emotional distress, particularly in terms of depressed mood and anxiety, compared to their male counterparts (Casper, Belanoff, & Offer, 1996). However other studies boys exhibit better social adjustment compared to girls. This includes higher levels of social competence and lower levels of emotional adjustment difficulty (Mishra, 2020). Female students also show higher educational aspirations but struggle more with social and emotional adjustment compared to male students (Mishra, 2020). Female students tend to have better psychosocial adjustment compared to males. This includes higher levels of self-esteem and better emotional comfort (Klizas et al., 2018). Male students show higher levels of social adjustment and interpersonal support than females (Kaur & Sharma, 2022). A study found that adolescent girls from nuclear families showed better

socio-emotional adjustment compared to those from joint families. The differences were significant in social and emotional adjustment, though not in educational adjustment (Vaghela, 2015). Research on social skills training highlighted that secondary students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders benefit significantly from social skills training, suggesting that students from nuclear families, who often receive focused attention, may develop better socio-emotional skills (Cook et al., 2008). An assessment of life skills among higher secondary students revealed that those from urban, nuclear family backgrounds scored higher in life skills, which includes socio-emotional competencies necessary for effective coping with stress and social demands (Mathew & Jose, 2018). A cross-cultural study indicated that socio-emotional adjustment in high school students was significantly influenced by family relations, with those from nuclear families often showing higher interpersonal competence and self-esteem due to closer parent-child interactions (Scott & Scott, 1989).

Research indicated that the stream of study and social category (caste) significantly affect students' adjustment patterns. ST students demonstrated notable socio-emotional adjustment abilities (Behera & Behera, 2015). Research indicated that ST students showed significant socio-emotional adjustment, outperforming SC, OBC, and General caste students in emotional and social domains (Behera & Behera, 2015). A study assessing adjustment among rural and urban students of SC/ST and other castes found that SC/ST students generally exhibited similar levels of emotional and social adjustment compared to General Merit (GM) students. However, ST students, particularly females, showed better emotional adjustment than their counterparts (Venkateshaiah & Kumar, 2013). ST students were found to have higher levels of emotional

stability and social desirability traits compared to SC and OBC students, contributing to their better socio-emotional adjustment (Jiloha & Kishore, 1998). A study found that both mothers' and fathers' education levels have a positive but weak relationship with the social adjustment of secondary-level students. The study highlighted that students whose parents, particularly fathers, had higher educational qualifications exhibited better social adjustment (Ahmad et al., 2021). Overall, socio-emotional adjustment is vital for achieving success and maintaining well-being across various aspects of life, underscoring its importance in our interconnected society.

### **Conclusion**

In general, socioemotional adjustment is crucial for successful behavior and well-being throughout the entire connected world of life. In general, socio-emotional adjustment is important in achieving success and keeping well in life generally important in society's connected world. The study on socio-emotional adjustment among higher secondary level students in West Bengal found that gender and family type do not significantly affect socio-emotional adjustment, but caste does, with ST students showing better adjustment. The father's education level also did not significantly impact adjustment. Overall, socio-emotional adjustment is important for academic success and personal well-being. The results suggest that schools should focus on improving students' socio-emotional skills through supportive environments, parental involvement, and effective educational strategies to ensure their overall development and success.

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