

Assessment of the Individual and Family Characteristics Role in Adjustment among Secondary School Female Students in Mahshahr City

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Abstract

Background: Adolescence is a period of important emotional, physical, and mental changes characterized by significant adjustment problems. Adjustment with others is the most essential aspect of personal development. On the other hand, the inability to adjust with others may disrupt the normal flow of everyday life and emotional, social, and cognitive aspects. The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between adjustment and individual and family characteristics in secondary school female students in Mahshahr city.

Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted on 194 students. The participants were selected through multi-stage sampling. First, the data were collected using two questionnaires, including demographic and Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS). Then, the data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, chi-square, correlation coefficient, and one-way ANOVA.

Results: The results showed a significant relationship between the mother's educational level, the families' economic conditions, and leisure time management with total and emotional adjustment in students ($P < 0.05$). There was a significant relationship between the number of brothers and the educational level of the mother, with educational adjustment in students. ($P < 0.05$). The correlation coefficient results showed a positive and significant correlation ($P < 0.05$) between emotional, social, and educational adjustment.

Conclusion: According to the research findings, family factors need special attention to increase student adjustment.

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Introduction

Adolescence is the onset of the individuality and independence trajectory and one of the main courses of life. Indeed, it is reckoned as a stage to transfer from childhood to adulthood. This stage is accompanied by physiological, psychological, and social variations in addition to rapid behavioral changes. On the other

hand, due to their lack of skills and experiences, many adolescents cannot properly confront these stressful factors. Thus, they gradually experience difficulties in their social adjustment, given their image of themselves.¹⁻³ Goldstein and Lanyon defined adjustment as a continuous process of one's social learning experiences bringing about skills and competencies for need satisfaction.⁴

Sadock and Sadock recognize adjustment as a

general concept of all strategies for managing stressful life conditions, including actual and unreal threats.⁵ Adjustment is influenced by social, psychological, and biological factors. Some disorders occur in adjustment and bodily and mental health processes in light of negative emotions rooted in social problems.⁶ Adjustment appears at different levels, one of which embraces social, emotional, bodily, and ethical dimensions, and the other deals with adjustment at three emotional, educational, and social levels.⁷

Adjustment, in general, and social adjustment, in particular, is a relative concept that differs from one society to another due to being impressed by cultures and beliefs.⁸ Social adjustment is a broad spectrum encompassing family, school, occupation, and marriage.⁹ It involves both assimilation and accommodation, and this alleviates the tensions the environment imports to the individuals, gives rise to students' peace of mind, and enhances their educational performance.¹⁰

Educational adjustment includes teachers' intimate and kind relationships, students' attitudes and beliefs towards the importance of school in their future success, feelings of proudness owing to task accomplishments, lesson mean scores, and the social acceptance of peers. Their study on a group of adolescents showed that educational adjustment correlated with acceptance, parents' behavioral and psychological control, and family support.¹⁰ Students who think that they receive enormous support from the social network, including parents, friends, and teachers, further avoid problematic behaviors. As a result, they are more satisfied with the school, feel more self-efficient, spend many hours studying, and achieve higher scores. Hence, we can state that positive educational consequences increase when various institutional factors, including physical, behavioral, and communicational factors pave the way for students' adjustment.¹¹

Emotional and social competencies and qualifications are the determinant factors that impact educational adjustment.¹² Another aspect of adjustment is emotional, which is defined as uncovering individuals' feelings and emotions and controlling them when establishing relationships with others.¹³ Emotional adjustment involves proper mental health, personal life satisfaction, and coordination among feelings, activities, and thoughts. Put differently, emotional adjustment means the mechanisms through which one reaches emotional stability.^{14, 15} Lazarus introduced adjustment as a crucial factor in reducing conflicts between humans' internal and external domains. We can consider adjustment a personality trait or a composite of several personality traits, social and familial factors, and the like.¹⁶ Familial factors and experiences, educative styles, institutional factors, values, governing beliefs, peers, families, and education play specific

roles in adolescents' adjustment. Parents' sensitive (on-time response diagnosis and responding to the child) and cooperative (coordinating behavior with the child's needs and establishing relationships on the crucial moments) behavior encourages the children's adjustive behavior.^{7, 17} Economic problems, adverse life incidences, family unrest, and parents' behavior instability are the most well-known risk factors for adolescents' adjustment.¹¹ The satisfaction rate of the mother with her adolescent integrally contributes to his intrinsic adjustment. The quality of the family environment also affects external adjustment.¹⁸

Therefore, adjustment and coordination with the self and surrounding environment are vital for any living creature. All daily efforts of humans rotate around adjustment. Every human, consciously or unconsciously, endeavors to meet his diverse and sometimes contradictory needs in his living environment.⁷ Given one of the difficulties of modern mechanical life is the presence of varying social adjustments, we need to discover the triggering and manifesting reasons for such negative behaviors of humans and present solutions by being aware of the reasons.¹⁹

In this study, we decided to examine the factors related to student adjustment to provide the basis for the necessary interventions to improve student adjustment. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the effect of individual and family characteristics on the high school students adjustment.

Methods

Research Method, Statistical Population, and Sample

This study was cross-sectional (descriptive-analytical). The statistical population of this research comprised all-female high school students of Mahshahr city in the 2015-2016 academic year. Using the

$$n = \frac{z_{1-\alpha/2}^2 \times s^2}{d^2}$$

sample-size determining formula, we selected 194 students by the multi-stage random sampling method. At first, seven schools were randomly selected from the girl's high schools in the city's different districts. Then, one class was selected randomly from every school. Next, the students who were present and inclined to participate in the study were investigated. Inclusion criteria: Satisfaction for participation in research, gender (girl), secondary school, educational employment and physical or mental illness condition were inclusion criteria; whereas incomplete completion of the questionnaire was exclusion criteria

Measurement Tool

High school student adjustment questionnaire: The adjustment questionnaire developed by Sinha from

Shankar University, and Singh from Pant University was used to separate 14-18-year-old high school students with high adjustment from those with low adjustment in three emotional, social, and educational domains. This research employed the final 60-item version with yes/no alternatives. In test scoring, 0 denoted adjustment, and 1 indicated maladjustment. Sinha and Singh reported the split-half reliability coefficients of 0.95 for the whole scale and coefficients of 0.94, 0.93, 0.96 for the emotional, social, and educational subscales, respectively.²⁰ In Naveedi's study, the Cronbach alpha reliability index for the total adjustment equaled 0.82, and the educational, emotional, and social indices showed a reliability coefficient of 0.76, 0.68, and 0.65, respectively.²¹

Demographic-social information questionnaire: This questionnaire includes age, birth order, parents' educational level (illiterate, under diploma, diploma, associate, bachelor, etc.), father's and mother's occupation (jobless, housewife, worker, employee, self-employed, retired), the emotional environment of family, family conditions (if parents live together, they are divorced, or one of the parents has passed away), the residence place of students, the income rate of family, and leisure time management.

Methodology: After the researchers selected samples and coordinated with the related authorities and attracted the cooperation and participation of the subjects, they administered the questionnaires and answer sheets to the participants. The questionnaires were filled out by the researcher's supervision and individual and collective guidance. Before filling out the questionnaires, the subjects received information about ethical considerations. After extracting the data, we analyzed them statistically at two descriptive and inferential levels (Kendall's Tau correlation coefficient, ANOVA, and Chi-square tests).

This study embarked on data collection after acquiring a license from the Research Deputy of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, legal and ethical agreement, and the informed consent of the understudy students.

The ethical considerations taken into account in this study include ensuring that the information will not be disclosed, explaining how the data will be generally exploited, carefully studying the questions, and selecting proper answers for students. Furthermore, the students were asked to avoid inserting their names and surnames.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Students

194 students participated in the study. They were 15-17-year-old students with a mean and standard deviation of 15.79 ± 0.64 . 33.5% of the students were their families's first child. The occupational situations

of the students' parents were as follows: 17% of fathers were jobless, and 83.5% of mothers were housewives. Educationally, 84.5% of the fathers and 59.3% of the students' mothers had diplomas or under-diploma degrees (Table 1).

Research Variables

Regarding the social adjustment, 73 students (37.6%) were at an average level, and 67 students (34.5%) were at a good level. Considering the frequency of the educational adjustment, 22 students (22%) had a very good educational adjustment, and 46 students (23.7%) had a good educational adjustment. Moreover, 62 (32%), 49 (25.3%), and 14 (7.7%) students enjoyed average, poor, and very poor adjustment levels, respectively.

In terms of emotional adjustment, 27 students (13.9%) had a very good emotional adjustment, and 85 students (43.8%) were good at emotional adjustment. Thirty (15.5%), 37 (19.1%), and 15 (7.7%) students had average, poor, and very poor levels of emotional adjustment, respectively. The frequency of the social adjustment in students was as follows: 17 (8.8%) and 80 (41.2%) students enjoyed very good and good levels of social adjustment. Likewise, 40 (20.6%), 41 (21.1%), and 16 (8.2%) students had average, poor, and very poor levels, respectively (Table 2).

The relationship between adjustment and background variables is presented in the following (Table 3). Mother's educational level impacts the total adjustment. There are positive and significant relationships between students' educational and emotional adjustment and mothers' educational level. The students' place of residence (the type of residence) influences their social adjustment positively and significantly. The cultural, economic, social, and value differences in the living environments affect students' adjustment. The economic conditions of families impact students' adjustment and emotional adjustment positively and significantly. The number of brothers affects the educational adjustment of students positively and significantly. The way the students spend their free time influences students' adjustment and emotional adjustment positively and significantly. The students', fathers', and mothers' age, how family members live together (family conditions) and the emotional family environment were investigated. The results showed no positive and significant relationships among the variables. And there was not any positive and meaningful relationship between life events and student adjustments. The father's educational level and the parents' occupational conditions did not have a positive and significant effect on students' adjustment. The results showed that the children of families with lower educational levels expected less of themselves and less trusted in their success. Moreover, the number of sisters did not show a positive and significant impact.

Table 1: Absolute and relative frequency distribution of students in terms of demographic variables

Variables		Abundance	Percentage
Birth rank	The first child	64	33%
	Second child onwards	130	67%
Father's education	Under diploma and diploma	164	84.5%
	Above the diploma	30	15.5%
Mother's education	Under diploma and diploma	115	59.3%
	Above the diploma	79	40.7%
Father's job	Unemployed	33	17%
	Employed	161	83%
Mother's job	Housewife	162	83.5%
	Employed	32	16.5%
Economic status of the family (In terms of income Tomans)	Less than 500 thousand	39	20.1%
	500 thousand to one million	60	30.9%
	One to two million	65	33.5%
	Above two million	30	15.5%
How to spend your free time	With family	43	22.2%
	With friends	52	26.8%
	With family and friends	75	38.7%
	Alone	24	12.4%

Table 2: Absolute and relative frequency distribution of students according to the level of adjustment components

	Educational adjustment	Emotional adjustment	Social adjustment	Total adjustment
Very good	22 (11.3%)	27 (13.9%)	17 (8.8%)	3 (1.5%)
Good	46 (23.7%)	85 (43.8%)	80 (41.2%)	67 (34.5%)
Medium	62 (32%)	30 (15.5%)	40 (20.6%)	73 (37.6%)
Weak	49 (25.3%)	37 (19.1%)	41 (21.1%)	41 (21.1%)
Very weak	14 (7.7%)	15 (7.7%)	16 (8.2%)	10 (5.2%)

Table 3: Results of the effect of individual and family variables on student adjustment components

Variables	Educational adjustment	Emotional adjustment	Social adjustment	Total adjustment
Age	F=0.535	F=1.230	F=1.187	F=1.318
	P=0.710	P=0.300	P=0.310	P=0.265
Father age	F=0.558	F=0.092	F=0.651	F=0.773
	P=0.690	P=0.985	P=0.627	P=0.544
Mother's age	F=0.968	F=0.302	F=0.784	F=1.701
	P=0.427	P=0.876	P=0.537	P=0.152
Number of sisters per	F=0.558	F=0.625	F=2.316	F=0.941
	P=0.690	P=0.645	P=0.059	P=0.442
Number of brothers per	F=3.240	F=0.674	F=1.768	F=1.315
	P=0.013	P=0.611	P=0.137	P=0.266
Family conditions	P=0.690	P=0.939	P=0.566	P=0.720
	P=0.690	P=0.007	P=0.127	P=0.005
Father's education	P=0.827	P=0.250	P=0.779	P=0.257
	P=0.391	P=0.876	P=0.603	P=0.155
Mother's job	P=0.264	P=0.868	P=0.567	P=0.881
	P=0.082	P=0.580	P=0.138	P=0.876
Place of residence (type of residence)	P=0.963	P=0.670	P=0.046	P=0.345
	P=0.242	P=0.001	P=0.059	P=0.006
Emotional relationships in the family	P=0.056	P=0.416	P=0.616	P=0.056
	P=0.234	P=0.001	P=0.310	P=0.008
Life events	P=0.460	P=0.788	P=0.234	P=0.492

*Anova; **Crosstabe

The birth order did not show any impact on students' social, emotional, and educational adjustment.

As depicted in Table 4, an individual's adjustment improves when his emotional, social, and educational adjustments increase. It shows positive and significant

relationship between adjustment dimensions.

Discussion

One of the problems that have been highly emphasized

Table 4: The results of the correlation coefficient test between the components of student adjustment

	Educational adjustment	Emotional adjustment	Social adjustment	Total adjustment
Educational adjustment	1	0.370 0.0001	0.333 <0.0001	0.611 <0.001
Emotional adjustment	0.370 0.0001	1	0.387 <0.0001	0.664 <0.0001
Social adjustment	0.333 <0.0001	0.387 <0.0001	1	0.675 <0.0001
Total adjustment	0.611 <0.0001	0.664 <0.0001	0.675 <0.0001	1

from the past to the present is individuals' health. In line with this objective, many medical advancements have been achieved; however, it seems that mere medical developments cannot lead humans to complete or, at least, relative health. We can say that the social factor is no less important than medical developments. Adjustment with self and the environment is vital for any creature and is reckoned as the most vital sign of mental health. The everyday efforts of humans turn around the adjustment axis. Psychologists recognize some normal personality traits, which help individuals adjust themselves to their surrounding world, i.e., live with others peacefully and attain a status for self in society.²² This study investigated the relationship between adjustment dimensions and the demographic characteristics of female high school students in Mahshahr city.

The research findings showed that 41.2% of students enjoyed a good social adjustment. This result was in line with Azin's study, in which 47.4% of students had an average adjustment.⁷ It is also consistent with Mousavi's research.²³ We can explain this alignment based on the probability that human personality culminates when there are equilibrium and interaction between his surroundings. Social pressures extensively impact human behavior. On the other hand, the human is a flexible creature. He adjusts with the environment and transforms it according to his wills.⁷

The results of this study reveal that there is a significant relationship between the mother's educational level and the student's emotional and educational adjustment. That is, the student's adjustment enhances educationally and emotionally as the mother's educational level increases. Numerous studies show a significant relationship between student adjustment and the mother's educational level. For example, the results of Shashnani and Khalili on Iranian university students confirmed that educational adjustment improved with an increase in parents' educational level.²⁴ Kalpana Devi et al. disclosed the father's educational qualification and mother's occupation had a significant positive relationship with adjustment among adolescents.²⁵ This issue holds true in the results of Peak's study claiming that the students with low-educated parents face difficulties in their social adjustment with the university environment.²⁶ Soledad Rodríguez et al.

showed that parents' education and family support were indirect predictors of students' adjustment to university.²⁷

Concerning these results, we can explain that educational adjustment correlates with parents' behavioral and psychological control and family support.¹⁰ Students who think that they receive great support from the social network (parents, friends, and teachers) present more adjusted responses to their surrounding environment.¹¹

Furthermore, based on the research findings, students' residence place was significantly related to their social adjustment. However, there was no positive and significant relationship between the emotional family environment and student adjustment. Veenstra showed a relationship between family environment and students' adjustment with the university environment.²⁸ Nelson et al., claimed that disagreement between the mother and father negatively impacts the youths' adjustment irrespective of family conditions.²⁹ Roshanei confirmed the effect of family environment on student adjustment with the university environment.¹⁷

Saqi and Rajaei confirmed a significant relationship between adolescents' perceptions of overall family functioning and their adjustment. The adaptive family performance will bring about adolescent adjustment.^{30,31} The research results of Safarzadeh indicated a significant relationship between variables of family's students.³² The research results showed that family cohesion could well predict high school students' emotional adjustment. However, educational adjustment was predicted by their satisfaction with the family.³³

Concerning the above results, we can explain that the individuals' personal, home, social, and formal relationships impact the research results. Furthermore, an adolescent's extrinsic adjustment is influenced by the quality of the family environment,¹⁸ showing the distinctive role of the family's functional dimensions in student adjustment.

In this study, the relationship between the economic conditions of families and students' adjustment and emotional adjustment was positive and significant. These results conformed to the studies that confirm the effect of economic welfare on adjustment.³⁴ The research results of JP Farley indicated that family financial status might play an important role in the

development of adolescent adjustment.³⁵ The parents capable of supplying educational resources to their children fortify the children's ability to confront anxiety and inconveniences. The provision of financial aids for the students affects their adjustment positively.

This student's adjustment. Likewise, the relationship between the student and his brother increased his adjustment. This finding was in line with the study of Larsen and Mute. It showed that the adolescents who qualitatively experienced proper relationships with their parents displayed better adjustment than those with improper relationships.³⁶

The more trust and communication between parents and children, the more adjustment will be for the children.³⁷ Mohammad far study showed that family performance has a significant relationship with students' adjustment and it is an important factor in predicting social adjustment.³⁸ The study's findings were consistent with Bist et al. and Ramaprabou.³⁹⁴⁰ The research results of the Cebula et al. showed significant associations between sibling relationship quality and their adjustment level.⁴¹

To elucidate the obtained results, we can state that social and emotional behaviors, besides creating a kind atmosphere and proper human relationships in the family, can impact the establishment of relationships and treatments with the student. The family behavior and family-governing relationships correspond to the adolescents' behavioral and psychological development. Father's and mother's contradictory behaviors divorced parents, the long-term absence of one of the parents, the presence of unfavorable atmosphere in the family, the aggression of the mother, father, or both, discrimination and unfairness towards the adolescent, his degradation and sense of insecurity, too much interference with his works, and threatening behaviors are among the social-psychological reasons for the emergence of adolescent maladjustment.⁴²

In this study, fathers' educational level, parents' occupations, and number of sisters were not confirmed as effective factors. These results do not conform to the findings of Shishani and Khalili's study on Iranian university students. These researchers inferred that the children whose mothers have better occupational conditions possess higher self-confidence and interest and are more aware of the benefits of education.²⁴ On the other hand, Shashani and Khalili and Horen and Tanz also confirmed the effect of the father's occupation on student's adjustment.⁴³ We can explain this difference in this way that some factors, including self-expectation in the scope of possibilities and competencies, the identification of life goals and possession of a realistic approach towards them, and reasonable and appropriate educational purposes play roles in adjustment so one makes efforts to reach his goals and attain successes considering the situation.¹⁰

Ultimately, adjustment is a dynamic process by which one strives to satisfy one's inner needs through developed, efficient, and healthy responses.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Findings show that parents' education, family economic status, place of residence, leisure time, and family relationships significantly affect students' educational, emotional, and social adjustment.

Therefore, by providing a suitable family environment and increasing communication skills and abilities, a harmonious relationship can be established between self, family, and student environment. It is suggested that prospective researchers evaluate the impact of factors affecting adjustment such as self-concept and self-awareness in future studies.

Limitations

First, in self-measurement questionnaires, individuals often tend to reveal themselves better than what they are and they tend to be accepted by others. Hence, there is a doubt that social norms practically cast a shadow on students' behaviors when they fill out the questionnaires. Second, the present study only included female high school students in Mahshahr city, and the results are not generalizable to other school students.

Conflicts of interest: None declared.

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