

Interactive Effect of Gender, Type of School and Mental Health on Social Adjustment of Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the interactive effect of gender, type of school and mental health on social adjustment of higher secondary school students of Chhattisgarh. Adjustment inventory by Sinha and Singh (2009) and Mental Health Battery by Singh and Sengupta (2008) were administered on a sample of 480 higher secondary school students selected through disproportionate stratified random sampling technique from various government and private school of four districts of Chhattisgarh state, namely Durg, Raipur, Balod and Rajnandgoan. Data were analysed using 2×2 ×2 factorial design. Results revealed that gender, type of school and mental health do not influence the social adjustment of the students. It was further found that the main effect of gender was not significant whereas the main effects of type of school and mental health were significant. However, none of the interaction effects were found to be significant. The result has been explained in terms of the factors influencing social adjustment of adolescents. The study will pave way for implementing intervention programmes on mental health for improving social adjustment of adolescents, modification in teaching learning process and curriculum modification.

Introduction

Adaptation of the person to the social environment or adjustment may take place by adapting the self to the environment or by changing the environment (Campbell, 1996). Social adjustment refers to the success with which people adjust with other people, in general and with the group with which they identify themselves, in particular. Social adjustment signifies how we interact with

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the society members and how do we carry forward our social responsibilities. It is the ability or skill by which an individual maintains order and system in his relations with other beings in his/her neighbourhood, besides adapting his/her behaviour to the demands of the society. Well-adjusted people have social skills such as the ability to deal diplomatically with others (both friends and strangers) so that others' attitudes towards them will be favourable. People who make good social adjustments usually develop favourable social attitudes, such as a willingness to help others, even if they are personally inconvenienced. They are not self-bound (Hurlock, 1997).

Mental health is the ability to face and balance the reality of life (Bhatia, 1982). Mental health is a complex phenomenon and depends on a set of personal, psychological and social variables. Mental health is as an important feature as is the physical health of a person. Good mental health depends on the good state of both mind and body. Each exerts a direct influence on the other, but owing to the power of matter, good mental health is of supreme importance. According to Hadfield (1952), mental health is the harmonious functioning of the whole personality. Khan (2003) observed that among the two principal agencies influencing the child's adjustment and mental health, home is the most important agency, responsible for the adjustment, maladjustment and promotion of mental health of the children. Next to home the school is found an effective agency in fostering mental health. Thus, to control the problem of mental health in the society, it is necessary to improve the mental health of the teachers and without a good role model, it is not possible to have a healthy society.

Adolescents are the future of our nation. It is our duty including those of psychologists, educationists and sociologists to develop the personality of adolescents in an effective manner. Social adjustment and mental health are important aspects in the development of personality.

When mental health problems of young people go untreated, it affects their development, school performance and relationships which lead to school failure, family conflicts, drugs abuse, violence and even suicide. The present study, therefore, examined the effect of gender, type of school and mental health on social adjustment of higher secondary students.

Objective

The main objective of the study was to identify the main and interactive effect of gender, type of school and mental health on the social adjustment of higher secondary school students.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesised that gender, type of school and mental health will not have significant effect on the social adjustment of higher secondary school students.

Method

Tools

Adjustment inventory by A.K.P. Sinha and R.P. Singh (2009) was used for measuring social adjustment. The inventory consisted of 60 items related to three areas, emotional adjustment, social adjustment and educational adjustment. The inventory contained 20 items for each area. However, for the present study social adjustment consisting of 20 forced-choice items was used. The reliability of the test estimated by different methods was split half method (.93), test-retest method (.90) and K.R. formula (.92). The higher score on the test indicated poor adjustment. Mental health of students was measured by Mental Health Battery by A. K. Singh and A. Sengupta (2008, revised version). It consisted of 130 items belonging to six dimensions of mental health. Reliability of various dimensions of the battery varied between 0.72 and 0.87. It also had concurrent and construct validity.

Sample

A disproportionate stratified random sampling technique was employed. In the first phase, the investigator randomly selected four districts of Chhattisgarh state. In the second phase, the investigator selected three government and three private schools from each district on random basis. In the third phase, the investigator randomly selected 10 male and 10 female students from each school. Thus, data were collected from 24 schools (12 government and 12 private schools). All the schools selected resulted in the sample of 480 higher secondary school students (Only Chhattisgarh board affiliated schools were selected for the present study).

Results

To examine the effect of gender, type of school and mental health on social adjustment, a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ analysis of variance was carried out. Table 1 contains the results.

Table 1
Summary of Analysis of Variance

Source of variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean sum square	F-ratio	Significance level
Gender (A)	15.290	1	15.290	3.075	.080 ^{NS}
Types of school (B)	34.689	1	34.689	6.976	.009**
Mental health (C)	1683.333	1	1683.333	338.526	.000**
A × B	2.237	1	2.237	.450	.503 ^{NS}
A × C	15.979	1	15.979	3.213	.074 ^{NS}
B × C	2.567	1	2.567	.516	.473 ^{NS}
A × B × C	1.372	1	1.372	.276	.600 ^{NS}
Error	1616.074	325	4.973		

** = Significant at 0.01; NS = Insignificant.

Results showed that there was no significant difference in social adjustment among higher secondary school students across gender. Hence, the hypothesis that there will be no significant difference in social adjustment among higher secondary school students due to gender was retained. This result is in agreement with the findings of Adhiambo et al. (2011), Dutta et al. (1998), Gehlawat (2011), Gira (2012) and Gupta and Sadh (2012). The effect of school (government vs. private) on social adjustment was found to be significant. Table 2 shows that the private school students were relatively more socially adjusted than their government counterparts (lower score indicated high on social adjustment).

Table 2
Mean Values of type of School on Social Adjustment

Type of school	Means
Government	14.375
Private	13.452

Hence, the hypothesis that there will be no main effect of type of school on social adjustment among secondary students was

rejected. Previously Gupta (1990) and Mangla and Satyaprakasha (2009) also reported that private school students showed better social adjustment than government school students.

Table 1 further revealed that F ratio for the main effect of mental health was significant, indicating the importance of mental health on social adjustment of higher secondary students. Hence, the hypothesis that there will be no main effect of mental health on social adjustment of higher secondary school students was rejected. The means of the social adjustment with respect to mental health of the students is shown in Table 3. It revealed that students having good mental health scored higher on social adjustment than those who were having poor mental health.

Table 3
Mean Values of Mental Health on Social Adjustment

Mental health	Mean
Poor	17.131
Good	10.696

The results also revealed that none of the interaction effects were significant indicating that gender, type of school, and mental health influence, if any, social adjustment of the students independently.

Discussion

The study showed that the social adjustment of the students studying in private school is significantly higher than that of the students studying in government schools. The probable reason may be the continuous support provided by the teachers of private school to the students for their overall development. Private schools organise different kinds of co-curricular activities compulsorily in which they arrange activities like news, prayer, thought for the day in which each child get chance to participate. Besides, in private schools various events and activities like dance competition, song competition, debate etc. are organised in which the participation of all students is almost compulsory. The students also get a chance to organise these activities which help to improve the level of their self-confidence, understanding and spirit of sports which help in social emotional and educational adjustment of the students.

In contrast, students of government schools do not have scope for co-curricular activities and students are also hesitant

to participate in such activities which retard their growth and development. The teachers also frequently employ traditional methods of teaching in government schools and do not encourage the students to ask questions. This type of behaviour on the part of the teachers leads to development of frustration and inferiority complex among the students. But in private school the student get more opportunities and exposure. The teachers of private schools also provide the report of educational progress and other activities of child to their parents from time to time in parents. During parent-teacher meeting, they try to extract the knowledge about the family background of the students which facilitate them in rapport building with the students, thus helping in students' social adjustment. In government schools, parents-teachers meetings are practically absent.

In the present study it was found that the students having high adjustment also had good mental health. The reason may be the students having good mental health have high level of self-concept, self-confidence, feeling of security, emotional stability and autonomy, and comparatively low anxiety level, stress, frustration and problems of adjustment which helps them to adjust properly at school, home and society; understand the feelings of others; and manage their emotions properly. They also present themselves in a proper manner. On the other hand, the students with poor mental health have higher level of fear, anxiety and frustration and are unable to control their emotions. Consequently they suffer from low self-concept and low self-confidence and, in turn, are maladjusted at their homes, school and society and are unable to solve their problems.

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