



Wisdom Vortex:

International Journal of Social Science and
Humanities

Bi-lingual, Open-access, Peer Reviewed,
Refereed, Quarterly Journal

e-ISSN: 3107-3808

Wisdom Vortex: International Journal of
Social Science and Humanities, Volume: 01,
Issue: 02, Jul-Sep 2025

How to cite this paper:

Minz, D. I. L. (2025). A Comparative Study of
Psychological Well-Being and Adjustment Among
Secondary School Students Across Gender and
School Type, *Wisdom Vortex: International
Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, 01(02),
01 – 06. <https://doi.org/10.64429/wvijsh.01.02.001>

Received: 12 Apr 2025

Accepted: 24 June 2025

Published: 31 Jul. 2025

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International Journal of Social Science and Humanities.
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A Comparative Study of Psychological Well-Being and Adjustment Among Secondary School Students Across Gender and School Type

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a critical period marked by emotional, social, and psychological transitions that significantly influence mental health and personal development. This study aimed to examine the impact of gender and type of school on the psychological well-being and adjustment of secondary school students. The sample consisted of 80 adolescents (40 boys and 40 girls) selected through stratified random sampling from government and private schools in the West Singhbhum district. Psychological well-being was assessed using the Psychological Well-Being Scale by Sisodia and Choudhary, and adjustment was measured using the Adjustment Inventory for School Students by Sinha and Singh. Independent samples t-tests were applied to analyze the impact of gender and school type. The results revealed a significant impact of gender on both psychological well-being and adjustment, with girls scoring higher than boys on both variables. This finding suggests that female students may have better emotional regulation and coping mechanisms. Regarding the type of school, a significant impact was found on adjustment, with private school students showing better adjustment than their government school counterparts. However, no significant difference was found in psychological well-being based on school type. The study highlights that gender plays a more consistent role in influencing both psychological well-being and adjustment, while school type primarily affects adjustment. These findings emphasize the importance of gender-sensitive mental health programs and improving student support systems in government schools. Further research is recommended to explore additional factors such as socio-economic status, parenting style, and peer relationships affecting adolescent mental health.

Keywords: *Psychological Well-Being, adjustment, adolescents, gender differences, school type*

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Numerous physical, emotional, and social changes that occur during adolescence are significant developmental milestones that influence a person's identity and mental well-being. Secondary school students frequently deal with peer pressure, parental expectations, academic pressure, and the need for social acceptance during this time, all of which can have a negative impact on their psychological health and general ability to adjust to new circumstances. Adolescent development is significantly influenced by psychological well-being, which is a reflection of an individual's sense of life satisfaction, emotional equilibrium, and personal development (Ryff, 1989). Contrarily, adjustment refers to the ability to successfully adjust to shifting circumstances, demands, and interpersonal relationships in the social, intellectual, and emotional spheres (Shaffer, 2002). A stable psychological state and positive adjustment patterns are essential for students to cope with academic and personal challenges, especially in the school setting.

Numerous studies have highlighted that factors such as gender and type of school may significantly influence the psychological experiences of adolescents. Gender differences have been consistently observed in psychological well-being and adjustment patterns, with some studies suggesting that girls tend to report higher emotional distress and lower well-being than boys, while others argue that boys often show poorer school adjustment and coping mechanisms (Reddy et al., 2018; Deb et al., 2015). These variations can be attributed to socio-cultural expectations, emotional expression norms, and differences in coping strategies. Furthermore, the type of school—government versus private—also appears to play a role in shaping students' psychological development. Private schools, often equipped with more resources and extracurricular opportunities, may foster better student-teacher interaction and student support systems. In contrast, students in government schools may experience different socio-economic and infrastructural challenges that influence their psychological and emotional adjustment (Kaur & Kaur, 2016).

Research also indicates a significant correlation between psychological well-being and adjustment. Students with high psychological well-being are often better adjusted, both socially and emotionally, and are more likely to perform well academically (Sahoo & Khess, 2010). However, there is a need to explore how these relationships vary across gender and different educational settings. While many studies have focused individually on either psychological well-being or adjustment, there remains a gap in understanding their combined dynamics with respect to demographic variables like gender and school type. In this context, the present study aims to comparatively analyze psychological well-being and adjustment among secondary school students with a focus on gender and type of school as independent variables. This investigation is crucial for designing student support interventions and educational policies that foster emotional and psychological resilience among adolescents.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Psychological well-being and adjustment are two interrelated aspects that play a vital role in the holistic development of adolescents, particularly during their secondary school years. Numerous studies have explored these constructs individually and in relation to various demographic variables, such as gender and type of school, to understand their influence on students' academic and personal lives.

Psychological well-being has been conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct that includes self-acceptance, purpose in life, autonomy, positive relations, personal growth, and environmental mastery (Ryff, 1989). Adolescents with high psychological well-being are generally more resilient and better able to navigate stress, maintain relationships, and pursue academic goals. A recent study by Singh and Verma (2022) found that adolescents with higher psychological well-being showed better academic performance and stronger social skills, regardless of their socio-economic background. Similarly, Rani and Bhatia (2021) observed that psychological well-being was significantly influenced by school environment and peer interaction, both of which vary depending on the type of school.

Adjustment refers to the process of adapting to environmental demands and maintaining emotional stability. It is generally categorized into three dimensions: emotional, social, and educational adjustment (Shaffer, 2002). Studies have shown that adolescents who are well-adjusted tend to have fewer behavioral problems, higher self-esteem, and better academic engagement (Mishra & Sinha, 2020). According to a study by Joseph and George (2023), students in private schools exhibited significantly higher levels of adjustment than those in government schools, possibly due to better infrastructure, teacher support, and extracurricular opportunities.

Gender differences have also been extensively studied in relation to psychological well-being and adjustment. While some studies suggest that females are more emotionally expressive and therefore more vulnerable to psychological distress, others report that males experience greater academic pressure and adjustment issues due to societal expectations (Deb et al., 2015; Reddy et al., 2018). For instance, a study by Naik and Choudhary (2021) reported that female students had significantly lower emotional adjustment scores compared to male students, although they scored higher in terms of psychological well-being.

The type of school—government or private—has been identified as a significant contextual variable influencing adolescent development. Research by Kumar and Sharma (2022) indicated that private school students reported higher psychological well-being and better adjustment, possibly due to greater availability of academic resources, mental health support, and a competitive environment that encourages personal growth.

Although these studies provide valuable insights, there is limited research that simultaneously examines psychological well-being and adjustment with respect to both gender and type of school. The present study attempts to fill this gap by analyzing the comparative impact and relationship of these variables, offering a more integrated perspective on adolescent mental health in secondary education settings.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The objectives for this study were as follows

1. To examine the impact of gender on the psychological well-being and adjustment of secondary school students.
2. To assess the impact of type of school on the psychological well-being and adjustment levels of secondary school students.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses were framed for the above objectives

- H₁: Gender has a significant impact on the psychological well-being and adjustment of secondary school students.
- H₂: Type of school have a significant impact on the psychological well-being and adjustment of secondary school students.

Sample

80 adolescents were selected with the help of stratified random sampling technique from various schools of West-Singhbhum district.

Tools

Psychological Well-being Scale designed by Dr. Devendra Singh Sisodia and Ms. Pooja Choudhary was used in this study to measure psychological well-being. This scale consists of total 50 statements. The test – retest reliability was 0.87 and consistency value for the scale is 0.90. The scale was validated against the external criteria and coefficient was 0.94.

The Adjustment Inventory for School Students has been designed by A. K. P. Sinha (1993), and R.P. Singh for use Hindi knowing school students of India. The inventory seeks to segregate well-adjusted secondary school students (age group 14 to 18 years) for the measurement of their adjustment (total as well as separately) in respect of three areas namely: Emotional, Social and Educational. The inventory consisted of 60 items, 20 items in each area of adjustment. It is a self-administering inventory. The split half reliability is 0.95, the test-retest reliability is 0.93 and the K-R formula reliability was found to be 0.94. Validity coefficients were determined for each item by the biserial correlation method significant level being .001.

RESULT

To test the hypotheses, t-test was applied on obtained scores of psychological well-being and adjustment.

Impact of gender on psychological well-being and adjustment among adolescents

To find out the impact of subgroups of gender on psychological well-being and adjustment among adolescents t-test was applied.

Table 01

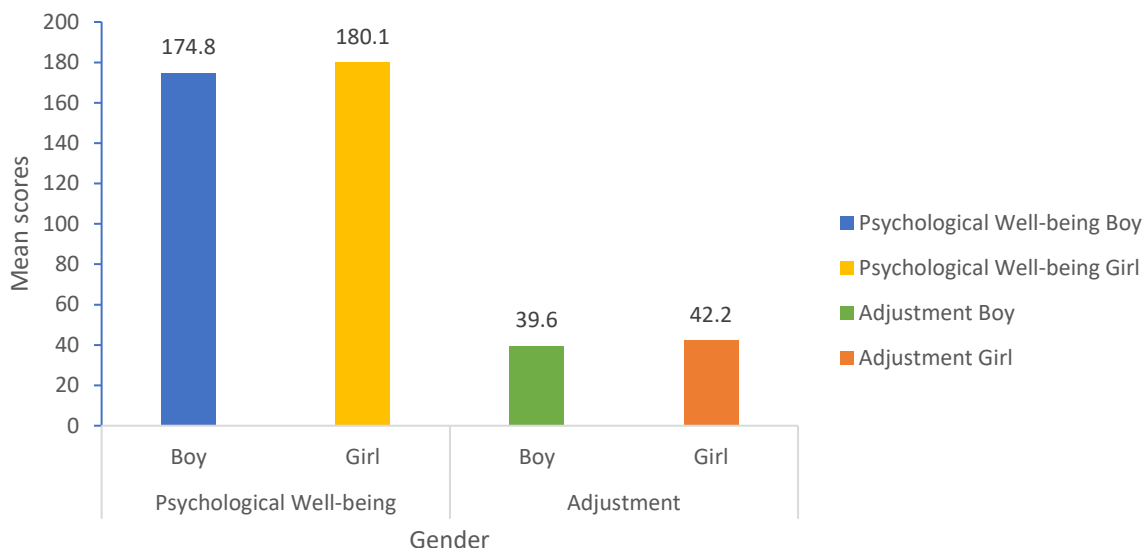
Comparison of boy and girl adolescents in terms of Psychological Well-being and adjustment

| | Group | N | Mean | SD | Mean Difference | df | t-value | p |
|---------------------------------|-------|----|--------|-------|-----------------|----|---------|-------|
| Psychological Well-being | Boy | 40 | 174.80 | 11.20 | 5.3 | 78 | 2.18 | 0.03* |
| | Girl | 40 | 180.10 | 10.15 | | | | |
| Adjustment | Boy | 40 | 39.60 | 5.25 | 2.6 | 78 | 2.39 | 0.02* |
| | Girl | 40 | 42.20 | 4.90 | | | | |

**significant at 0.01 level, *significant at 0.05 level, NS: Not Significant

Figure 01

Mean scores of boy and girl adolescents on psychological well-being and adjustment



From table 01 and figure 01 it is clear that, the mean scores of boy and girl adolescents were found to be 174.80 and 180.10 in psychological well-being and 39.60 & 42.20 in adjustment respectively. Mean difference was found 5.3 and 2.6 in psychological well-being and adjustment respectively. The obtained t value was found 2.18 and 2.39 in psychological well-being and adjustment, which are both significant at 0.05 level. Hence the hypothesis that, gender has a significant impact on the psychological well-being and adjustment of secondary school students, is accepted. Significant difference between mean scores of boy and girl adolescents in emotional intelligence and psychological well-being was found.

Impact of type of school on psychological well-being and adjustment among adolescents

To find out the impact of subgroups of type of school on psychological well-being and adjustment among adolescents t-test was applied.

Table 02

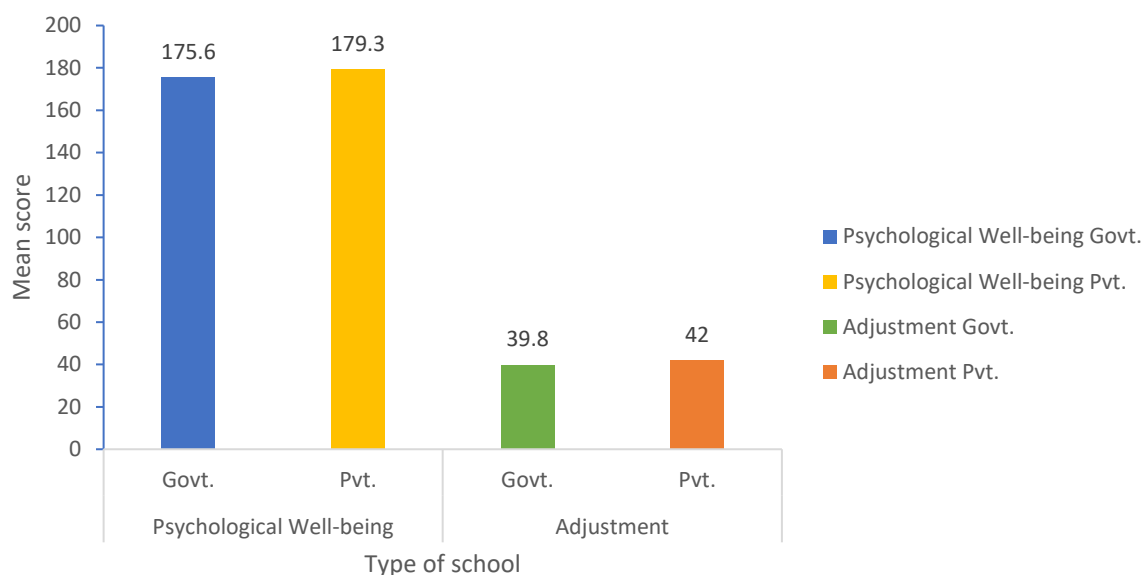
Comparison of government and private secondary school adolescents in terms of Psychological Well-being and adjustment

| | Group | N | Mean | SD | Mean Difference | df | t-value | p |
|---------------------------------|-------|----|--------|-------|-----------------|----|---------|--------------------|
| Psychological Well-being | Govt. | 40 | 175.60 | 10.85 | 0.15 | 78 | 1.65 | 0.10 ^{NS} |
| | Pvt. | 40 | 179.30 | 11.00 | | | | |
| Adjustment | Govt. | 40 | 39.80 | 5.60 | 2.2 | 78 | 2.05 | 0.04* |
| | Pvt. | 40 | 42.00 | 4.75 | | | | |

**significant at 0.01 level, *significant at 0.05 level, NS: Not Significant

Figure 02

Mean scores of government and private secondary school adolescents on psychological well-being and adjustment



From table 02 and figure 02 it is clear that, the mean scores of government and private school adolescents were found to be 175.60 and 179.30 in psychological well-being and 39.80 & 42.00 in adjustment respectively. Mean difference was found 0.15 and 2.2 in psychological well-being and adjustment respectively. The obtained t value was found 1.65 and 2.05 in psychological well-being and adjustment, in which t-value of psychological well-being was not found significant but, t-value of adjustment was found significant at 0.05 level. Hence the hypothesis that, Type of school have a significant impact on the psychological well-being and adjustment of secondary school students is accepted partially. Significant difference between mean scores of government and private secondary school adolescents in adjustment was found but and not in psychological well-being.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the impact of gender and type of school on psychological well-being and adjustment among secondary school students. The findings revealed that gender had a significant impact on both psychological well-being and adjustment. Girls scored higher than boys, indicating better emotional balance and adaptability. This aligns with earlier studies suggesting that female students tend to have stronger social support systems and are more expressive emotionally (Naik & Choudhary, 2021; Deb et al., 2015). These traits may contribute to enhanced self-awareness and coping strategies among girls. In contrast, some studies have reported better school adjustment among boys due to greater independence and lower emotional sensitivity (Reddy et al., 2018), which was not supported by the current findings. Cultural or regional differences may explain these variations. Regarding type of school, the study found a significant impact on adjustment but not on psychological well-being. Students from private schools were better adjusted than those in government schools, likely due to better infrastructure, academic support, and extracurricular opportunities (Joseph & George, 2023). However, psychological well-being, being more internal and subjective, may be influenced more by personal and familial factors than by school environment, which could explain the non-significant difference (Kumar & Sharma, 2022). Overall, the results suggest that gender consistently influences both well-being and adjustment, while school type mainly affects adjustment. These findings emphasize the need for gender-sensitive interventions and improved student support systems in government schools to enhance adolescent adjustment and emotional resilience.

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