

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT SOCIOLOGY & HUMANITIES



ISSN 2277 – 9809 (online)

ISSN 2348 - 9359 (Print)

An Internationally Indexed Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal

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www.isarasolutions.com

Published by iSaRa Solutions

SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS.

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ABSTRACT

School adjustment is a crucial indicator of students' successful adaptation to the academic, social, emotional, and behavioural demands of school life, particularly during higher secondary education when adolescents experience significant developmental and educational transitions. Although school adjustment has been extensively investigated in relation to academic achievement, mental health, family environment, and school climate, the available literature remains fragmented and lacks an integrated conceptual perspective. The present paper aims to develop a comprehensive theoretical understanding of school adjustment among higher secondary students by synthesizing major educational and psychological theories and examining the multidimensional factors influencing students' adjustment.

The paper adopts a conceptual review methodology based on an analytical synthesis of classical and contemporary literature on school adjustment, developmental psychology, educational psychology, and school education. It integrates major theoretical perspectives, including Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory, and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, to explain school adjustment as a multidimensional developmental process.

The review suggests that school adjustment is shaped through the interaction of personal characteristics, family environment, school climate, teacher support, peer relationships, and broader socio-environmental influences. Based on the synthesized literature, the paper proposes a conceptual framework illustrating how these interacting systems collectively influence students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioural adjustment, ultimately contributing to their overall well-being and educational success.

The paper contributes to educational literature by providing an integrated theoretical framework that consolidates diverse perspectives on school adjustment and highlights its multidimensional nature. The proposed framework has important implications for teachers, school leaders, counsellors, teacher education programmes, and educational policy by emphasizing the need for holistic, learner-centred, and supportive school environments. It also provides a conceptual foundation for future empirical research on school adjustment across diverse educational contexts.

Keywords: School Adjustment; Higher Secondary Students; Educational Psychology; School Climate; Student Well-being; Conceptual Framework; Educational Implications.

INTRODUCTION

School adjustment is a critical indicator of students' successful adaptation to the academic, social, emotional, and behavioural demands of school life. It extends beyond academic performance and reflects the extent to which students establish positive relationships with teachers and peers, participate effectively in classroom activities, comply with school norms, and maintain emotional well-being within the school environment. During the higher secondary stage, students encounter numerous developmental and educational challenges associated with adolescence, increasing academic expectations, career-related decisions, and changing social relationships. The ability to adjust successfully to these demands significantly influences students' academic success, psychological well-being, and overall personality development. Consequently, school adjustment has emerged as an important area of research in educational psychology and school education (Baker & Siryk, 1984; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Santrock, 2019).

Contemporary educational reforms have further strengthened the importance of promoting students' holistic development alongside academic achievement. In India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 advocates learner-centred education that emphasizes cognitive, social, emotional, and ethical development rather than focusing exclusively on examination performance. The policy highlights the need to create inclusive, supportive, and engaging school environments that foster students' well-being, resilience, communication, collaboration, and life skills. Such educational goals cannot be achieved without ensuring that students are well adjusted to their school environment, making school adjustment a key determinant of quality education and positive developmental outcomes.

School adjustment is widely regarded as a multidimensional and dynamic process influenced by the interaction of personal, familial, school, and environmental factors. Developmental and ecological theories suggest that students' adjustment is shaped not only by their individual characteristics but also by the quality of relationships and experiences within their immediate and broader social contexts. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory emphasizes that students develop through continuous interaction with multiple environmental systems, while Erikson's psychosocial theory identifies adolescence as a crucial stage for identity formation and psychosocial adjustment. Likewise, social constructivist perspectives underscore the role of supportive teacher–student and peer interactions in facilitating successful adaptation to school life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Erikson, 1968; Vygotsky, 1978). These theoretical perspectives collectively suggest that school adjustment is a comprehensive developmental outcome rather than merely an indicator of academic success.

Although school adjustment has been investigated in relation to academic achievement, motivation, mental health, family environment, and school climate, the existing literature remains fragmented, with relatively few conceptual studies synthesizing its theoretical foundations and educational implications for higher secondary education. Given the increasing emphasis on

students' holistic development, emotional well-being, and inclusive schooling, there is a need for a comprehensive theoretical understanding of school adjustment. Accordingly, the present paper reviews the conceptual foundations, major theoretical perspectives, and determinants of school adjustment among higher secondary students and discusses their implications for educational practice, teacher education, and future research.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT

School adjustment refers to the process through which students successfully adapt to the academic, social, emotional, and behavioural demands of the school environment. It is a multidimensional construct that reflects the degree of harmony between students and their educational setting, enabling them to participate effectively in learning activities, establish positive interpersonal relationships, comply with school norms, and maintain psychological well-being. Rather than representing a fixed personal characteristic, school adjustment is a dynamic developmental process that evolves through continuous interaction between the individual and the school environment. Educational psychologists view successful adjustment as an indicator of students' ability to cope with developmental challenges, manage academic responsibilities, and respond positively to changing educational and social contexts (Baker & Siryk, 1984; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Santrock, 2019).

From a developmental perspective, school adjustment is particularly significant during the higher secondary stage, when students experience rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes associated with adolescence. Simultaneously, they encounter increased academic demands, career-related decision-making, peer influence, and heightened expectations from teachers and parents. Successful adjustment during this period enables students to manage these challenges effectively, thereby promoting academic success, psychological well-being, and healthy personality development. Conversely, poor adjustment may result in academic underachievement, emotional distress, behavioural difficulties, absenteeism, low self-esteem, and reduced engagement with school activities (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Erikson, 1968).

School adjustment is generally understood through four interrelated dimensions: **academic, social, emotional, and behavioural adjustment**. **Academic adjustment** refers to students' ability to cope with curricular demands, maintain interest in learning, complete academic tasks, and achieve satisfactory educational outcomes. It reflects effective study habits, classroom participation, time management, and positive attitudes toward learning (Baker & Siryk, 1984). **Social adjustment** involves establishing and maintaining healthy relationships with teachers, classmates, and other members of the school community. It encompasses cooperation, communication, peer acceptance, respect for others, and active participation in school life, all of which contribute to a supportive learning environment (Birch & Ladd, 1997).

Emotional adjustment denotes students' capacity to regulate emotions, manage stress, maintain self-confidence, and respond constructively to academic and interpersonal challenges. Emotionally well-adjusted students demonstrate resilience, optimism, and psychological stability, enabling them to cope effectively with the pressures of school life (Santrock, 2019). **Behavioural adjustment**, on the other hand, refers to students' ability to conform to school rules, display

appropriate classroom behaviour, exercise self-discipline, and participate responsibly in school activities. Positive behavioural adjustment contributes to a productive classroom climate and facilitates meaningful teaching–learning experiences (Wentzel, 2015). Although these dimensions are discussed separately for conceptual clarity, they are highly interdependent and collectively determine students' overall adjustment to school.

Contemporary educational research increasingly recognizes school adjustment as a **dynamic developmental process** rather than a static outcome. Students continuously adapt to changing academic expectations, interpersonal relationships, institutional norms, and personal developmental needs throughout their school years. This process is influenced by reciprocal interactions among individual characteristics, family environment, school climate, teacher support, peer relationships, and broader socio-cultural contexts. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective explains that students' adjustment develops through continuous interaction between the individual and multiple environmental systems, while Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the role of social interaction and guided learning in facilitating development. Consequently, school adjustment should be viewed as an evolving process that reflects students' successful adaptation to the complex demands of school life rather than merely an indicator of academic performance. This multidimensional and developmental perspective provides the conceptual foundation for understanding the factors influencing school adjustment and its educational significance in higher secondary education.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT

School adjustment is a complex developmental phenomenon that cannot be adequately explained by a single theoretical perspective. It is influenced by students' personal characteristics, developmental needs, social relationships, and interactions with the broader educational environment. Consequently, several psychological and educational theories provide complementary explanations of how students adapt to school life. Among these, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory, and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory offer a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding school adjustment among higher secondary students.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory explains human development as a result of continuous interaction between individuals and the multiple environmental systems in which they live (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The theory proposes five interconnected systems—**microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem**—that collectively influence students' adjustment and development. The microsystem, comprising family, school, teachers, and peers, has the most direct impact on students' daily experiences, while the mesosystem reflects the relationships among these settings, such as parent–teacher collaboration. The exosystem includes external influences such as parental workplace conditions and educational administration, whereas the macrosystem encompasses cultural values, educational policies, and societal expectations. The

chronosystem recognizes that developmental changes occur over time as students encounter new life experiences.

From this perspective, school adjustment is viewed as the outcome of reciprocal interactions between students and their educational environment. Supportive teachers, positive peer relationships, family involvement, and a healthy school climate collectively promote successful adjustment, whereas adverse environmental conditions may hinder students' academic, social, and emotional development. Thus, the ecological perspective highlights that school adjustment extends beyond individual characteristics and reflects the combined influence of multiple contextual factors.

Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory

Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory provides a developmental explanation of school adjustment by emphasizing the psychosocial challenges encountered during adolescence. According to Erikson (1968), higher secondary students are primarily engaged in the stage of **Identity versus Role Confusion**, during which they strive to develop a coherent sense of self while exploring personal values, career aspirations, and social roles.

Successful resolution of this developmental stage fosters self-confidence, emotional stability, and a positive sense of identity, enabling students to participate actively in academic and social activities. Conversely, unresolved identity conflicts may result in confusion, anxiety, low self-esteem, and difficulties in adjusting to school expectations. Teachers, peers, and parents therefore play an essential role in providing encouragement, acceptance, and opportunities for exploration, thereby facilitating healthy psychosocial development and successful school adjustment.

Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory

Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory views learning as a socially mediated process in which knowledge is constructed through interaction with more knowledgeable individuals and the surrounding cultural environment (Vygotsky, 1978). The theory emphasizes that cognitive development occurs through dialogue, collaboration, and guided participation within the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**, where learners accomplish tasks with appropriate support before achieving independent mastery.

The theory underscores the importance of classroom interaction, cooperative learning, and teacher guidance in promoting students' adjustment to school. Positive relationships with teachers and peers facilitate academic engagement, enhance communication skills, strengthen self-confidence, and foster a sense of belonging within the school community. Consequently, school adjustment is enhanced when classrooms provide opportunities for collaborative learning, active participation, and meaningful social interaction that support students' intellectual and emotional development.

Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory

Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory explains adjustment as a process through which individuals evaluate and respond to challenging or stressful situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to the theory, stress arises when individuals perceive that environmental demands exceed their available coping resources. Students continuously encounter academic examinations,

performance expectations, peer relationships, parental pressure, and career-related concerns, all of which may influence their adjustment to school.

The theory distinguishes between **problem-focused coping**, which involves addressing the source of stress, and **emotion-focused coping**, which aims to regulate emotional responses. Students possessing effective coping strategies are more likely to manage academic pressure, interpersonal conflicts, and emotional challenges successfully, resulting in better academic performance and psychological well-being. This perspective highlights that school adjustment depends not only on external support but also on students' capacity to cope adaptively with educational demands.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the reciprocal interaction among personal factors, behaviour, and environmental influences, a process described as **reciprocal determinism** (Bandura, 1986). The theory proposes that learning occurs through observation, modelling, and social experiences, while individuals actively regulate their own behaviour through cognitive processes.

A central concept of the theory is **self-efficacy**, defined as individuals' beliefs about their capability to perform specific tasks successfully. Students with high academic self-efficacy demonstrate greater confidence, persistence, resilience, and willingness to participate in learning activities, thereby exhibiting higher levels of school adjustment. Observing supportive teachers, successful peers, and positive classroom behaviours further strengthens students' confidence and adaptive behaviours. Consequently, Bandura's theory highlights the importance of creating learning environments that encourage positive modelling, constructive feedback, and self-belief to enhance students' adjustment to school.

Integrating Theoretical Perspectives

Although each theory explains school adjustment from a distinct perspective, they collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of the adjustment process. Bronfenbrenner emphasizes the influence of environmental systems; Erikson highlights developmental and identity-related challenges; Vygotsky focuses on the role of social interaction and guided learning; Lazarus and Folkman explain students' coping responses to academic and social stress; and Bandura underscores the importance of self-efficacy and reciprocal interactions between individuals and their environment. Together, these perspectives demonstrate that school adjustment is a multidimensional and dynamic process shaped by continuous interaction among personal characteristics, developmental tasks, social relationships, coping abilities, and educational contexts. This integrated theoretical framework provides a strong conceptual foundation for understanding the determinants of school adjustment and for designing educational practices that promote students' academic success, emotional well-being, and holistic development.

DETERMINANTS OF SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT

School adjustment is a multifaceted developmental outcome shaped by the interaction of individual, familial, school, and broader socio-cultural factors. Contemporary educational and developmental research increasingly recognizes that successful adjustment cannot be attributed to any single determinant; rather, it emerges from the continuous interaction between students'

personal characteristics and the environments in which they learn and develop (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Understanding these determinants is essential for designing educational interventions that foster students' academic success, psychological well-being, and positive engagement with school.

Student-Related Factors

Students' individual characteristics constitute the immediate foundation for successful school adjustment. Among these, personality traits influence how learners respond to academic demands, interpersonal relationships, and classroom experiences. Students who demonstrate emotional stability, conscientiousness, openness to learning, and adaptability generally exhibit higher levels of academic engagement and social integration than those who experience anxiety, impulsivity, or emotional instability (McCrae & Costa, 2008).

Self-esteem has consistently been identified as a significant predictor of school adjustment. Students with positive self-perceptions are more confident in participating in classroom activities, establishing peer relationships, and coping with academic challenges, whereas low self-esteem is often associated with withdrawal, poor motivation, and adjustment difficulties (Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & Rosenberg, 1995). Similarly, emotional intelligence contributes substantially to students' ability to recognize, regulate, and express emotions appropriately while maintaining constructive relationships with teachers and peers. Higher emotional intelligence has been associated with improved classroom behaviour, reduced stress, and greater psychological well-being (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).

Another important personal resource is resilience, which enables students to recover from academic setbacks, adapt to changing circumstances, and maintain motivation despite challenges. Resilient students are generally better equipped to cope with examination stress, peer conflicts, and transitional difficulties, thereby demonstrating higher levels of school adjustment (Masten, 2014). Collectively, these personal characteristics influence how students perceive, interpret, and respond to the educational environment.

Family-Related Factors

The family constitutes the primary social context in which attitudes toward learning, behaviour, and interpersonal relationships are developed. Parenting style has been widely recognized as one of the strongest family determinants of school adjustment. Authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and appropriate behavioural expectations, promotes students' self-confidence, responsibility, and academic engagement, whereas authoritarian or neglectful parenting has been associated with poorer adjustment outcomes (Baumrind, 1991).

Beyond parenting practices, the overall family environment—including emotional support, communication, family cohesion, and parental involvement in education—plays a crucial role in facilitating successful adjustment. Students who experience supportive family relationships generally demonstrate stronger emotional security, greater motivation, and more positive attitudes toward school (Epstein, 2011). Socio-economic status further influences adjustment by affecting access to educational resources, learning opportunities, healthcare, and extracurricular experiences. Although socio-economic disadvantage does not inevitably result in maladjustment,

it may increase students' vulnerability to academic stress and educational inequalities when adequate institutional support is lacking (Sirin, 2005).

School-Related Factors

Among environmental influences, school-related factors exert the most direct effect on students' day-to-day adjustment. School climate, reflecting the quality of interpersonal relationships, safety, organizational practices, and institutional culture, has consistently been associated with students' academic achievement, emotional well-being, and sense of belonging. Positive school climates encourage participation, mutual respect, and psychological safety, thereby facilitating successful adjustment (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013).

Teacher support represents another critical determinant. Teachers who demonstrate empathy, fairness, effective communication, and instructional support foster students' motivation, confidence, and engagement with learning. Positive teacher–student relationships have been repeatedly identified as protective factors against academic disengagement and behavioural problems, particularly during adolescence (Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012). Equally important are peer relationships, which contribute to students' social identity, emotional support, and school connectedness. Healthy peer interactions promote cooperation, belongingness, and psychological adjustment, whereas peer rejection, bullying, or social isolation may adversely affect students' academic and emotional functioning (Wentzel, 2015).

The classroom environment also shapes adjustment by influencing students' daily learning experiences. Learner-centred instruction, collaborative learning opportunities, constructive feedback, and inclusive classroom practices create conditions that encourage active participation and reduce adjustment difficulties. Conversely, highly competitive, punitive, or teacher-dominated classroom environments may restrict student engagement and increase academic stress (Fraser, 2012).

Contemporary Influences on School Adjustment

Rapid social and technological changes have introduced new challenges that influence students' adjustment to school. Digital technologies and social media have transformed communication, learning, and peer interaction, providing opportunities for collaboration while simultaneously increasing the risks of distraction, cyberbullying, social comparison, and excessive screen exposure. The educational impact of technology therefore depends largely on how effectively students regulate its use and integrate it into their learning processes (OECD, 2021).

Growing concern regarding adolescent mental health has further highlighted its relationship with school adjustment. Anxiety, depression, loneliness, and emotional distress may reduce students' motivation, concentration, classroom participation, and overall school engagement. Conversely, schools that provide psychological support, counselling services, and emotionally supportive environments contribute significantly to positive adjustment and resilience (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021).

Academic pressure has also become increasingly prominent, particularly among higher secondary students preparing for competitive examinations and career decisions. Excessive performance expectations from schools, families, and society may increase stress and negatively influence

emotional well-being unless accompanied by appropriate academic guidance and coping support (Putwain, 2007). In contrast, the growing emphasis on inclusive education encourages schools to recognize learner diversity, provide equitable learning opportunities, and foster acceptance of students with varied abilities, backgrounds, and learning needs. Inclusive educational practices strengthen students' sense of belonging and contribute positively to both social and emotional adjustment (UNESCO, 2020).

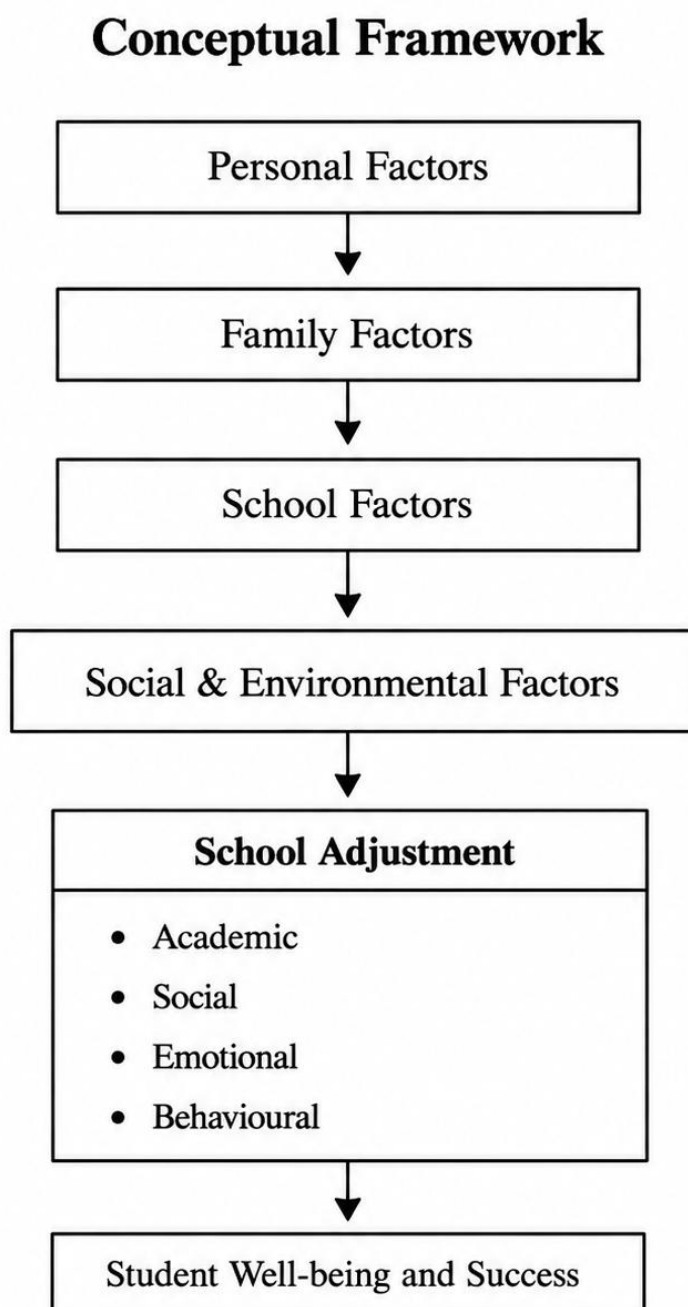
Overall, contemporary research indicates that school adjustment is best understood through an ecological and developmental perspective that recognizes the reciprocal interaction of individual, family, school, and societal influences. Personal attributes such as resilience and self-esteem interact with supportive parenting, positive school climate, teacher encouragement, peer relationships, and broader educational conditions to shape students' adjustment experiences. Thus, school adjustment should be viewed as the product of multiple interacting systems rather than the outcome of any single determinant, underscoring the need for holistic educational approaches that address both individual and contextual factors.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

School adjustment is a multidimensional construct that develops through the continuous interaction of individual, family, school, and broader social influences. Rather than being determined by a single variable, students' adjustment to school emerges from the combined effects of personal characteristics (e.g., self-esteem, resilience, emotional competence), family environment, school climate, teacher support, peer relationships, and contemporary contextual influences. These interacting factors collectively shape students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioural adjustment within the school setting.

Based on the reviewed literature and theoretical perspectives, the present paper proposes a conceptual framework illustrating the multidimensional nature of school adjustment. The framework suggests that favourable personal, family, school, and environmental conditions facilitate positive school adjustment, which, in turn, contributes to students' overall well-being, academic success, and healthy psychosocial development.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of School Adjustment among Higher Secondary Students



EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The conceptual understanding of school adjustment has significant implications for educational practice because students' successful adjustment is closely associated with their academic achievement, emotional well-being, social competence, and long-term educational success. Since school adjustment is shaped by the interaction of personal, family, school, and environmental factors, educational institutions should adopt a holistic approach that promotes supportive learning environments rather than focusing solely on academic performance. Such an approach aligns with contemporary educational priorities that emphasize students' overall development alongside scholastic achievement (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020).

Teachers play a pivotal role in facilitating school adjustment through their instructional practices, classroom management, and interpersonal relationships with students. Positive teacher–student relationships characterized by empathy, encouragement, constructive feedback, and inclusive classroom practices enhance students' sense of belonging, motivation, and engagement in learning. Teachers should therefore recognize individual differences, identify students experiencing adjustment difficulties at an early stage, and employ learner-centred pedagogical strategies that encourage participation, collaboration, and emotional security. Research consistently indicates that supportive classroom interactions significantly contribute to students' academic and psychosocial adjustment (Hamre & Pianta, 2006; Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012).

School leaders and counsellors also have a critical responsibility in creating institutional conditions that promote positive adjustment. School administrators should foster a positive school climate through inclusive policies, effective student support systems, safe learning environments, and meaningful collaboration among teachers, parents, and the community. Simultaneously, school counsellors should provide preventive and developmental guidance programmes that address academic stress, emotional concerns, career planning, interpersonal relationships, and mental health issues commonly experienced during adolescence. Systematic counselling services, life skills education, and socio-emotional learning programmes can strengthen students' resilience and coping abilities, thereby facilitating successful adjustment to school (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2020; Eccles & Roeser, 2011).

The findings also have important implications for teacher education and educational policy. Pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes should prepare teachers to understand the multidimensional nature of school adjustment and equip them with competencies related to classroom communication, inclusive education, socio-emotional learning, and student support. Educational policies should similarly promote comprehensive school health programmes, mental health services, family–school partnerships, and inclusive educational practices that support students' holistic development. In this regard, the National Education Policy (2020) provides an appropriate framework by advocating learner-centred education, well-being, flexibility, and inclusive learning environments. Strengthening these initiatives can contribute substantially to improving students' school adjustment and overall educational quality.

CONCLUSION

School adjustment is a multidimensional and dynamic developmental process that reflects students' ability to adapt successfully to the academic, social, emotional, and behavioural demands of the school environment. The present theoretical review demonstrates that school adjustment is influenced by the interaction of multiple systems, including individual characteristics, family environment, school climate, teacher support, peer relationships, and broader socio-cultural contexts. The synthesis of major theoretical perspectives—including Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory, and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory—indicates that successful adjustment cannot be understood through any single factor but emerges from the reciprocal interaction between learners and their educational environment (Bandura, 1986; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Erikson, 1968; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978).

A major contribution of this paper is the development of an integrated conceptual framework that consolidates diverse theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence into a comprehensive understanding of school adjustment among higher secondary students. By bringing together personal, family, school, and contemporary contextual influences within a single conceptual model, the paper provides a coherent theoretical foundation for future research and educational practice. Unlike studies that examine isolated determinants of adjustment, the proposed framework highlights the interconnected nature of factors influencing students' adaptation to school and emphasizes the need for a holistic perspective in educational research.

The review also carries important educational implications. It suggests that promoting school adjustment should become a shared responsibility of teachers, school leaders, counsellors, parents, and policymakers. Schools should foster inclusive and supportive learning environments, strengthen teacher–student relationships, implement comprehensive guidance and counselling services, and encourage active collaboration with families. Teacher education programmes should prepare prospective and practising teachers to recognize adjustment-related challenges and adopt learner-centred, socially responsive, and emotionally supportive pedagogical practices. These recommendations are consistent with the learner-centred and holistic vision of the National Education Policy (2020), which advocates students' well-being, inclusion, and overall development as integral components of quality education (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020).

Future research should empirically validate the conceptual framework proposed in this paper across different educational settings, school types, and socio-cultural contexts. Longitudinal studies may examine how school adjustment evolves during adolescence, while comparative investigations could explore variations across gender, locality, socio-economic status, and institutional environments. Further research may also investigate emerging determinants such as digital learning environments, social media engagement, mental health, resilience, and inclusive educational practices. Such investigations will strengthen the evidence base for understanding

school adjustment and support the development of effective interventions that enhance students' well-being, academic success, and overall educational outcomes.

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