

A Study of Psychosocial adjustment of Children with Special Needs at Middle stage

¹Alka Basanwal, ²Dr. Rajiv Ranjan

¹Research Scholar, ²Research Supervisor and Assistant Professor

^{1&2}Regional Institute of Education, Ajmer
Rajasthan, India

1alkabphdedu@gmail.com, 2rajivranjan@rieajmer.ac.in

Abstract

This study investigates the psychosocial adjustment of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) during the middle stage (grades 6–8, ages 11–14). Aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's which focus on holistic student wellness, the research addresses the psychological and social adaptation challenges, such as anxiety, depression, and poor self-esteem, frequently experienced by these children due to academic pressures.

Using descriptive research design and survey method, the study is delimited to government and private schools across rural and urban areas of the Ajmer district of Rajasthan, India. 400 students were selected for this study based on stratified sampling method. This sample is divided between rural (200) and urban (200) sectors, further split into government (100) and private (100) schools, and balanced across genders (50 male and 50 female students). Self made tool was used by the researcher which further standardized on the small sample of 120 students. This will be utilized to assess learning disabilities and psychosocial adjustment levels. The first hypothesis was -There is no significant difference between the psychosocial adjustment of children with special needs studying in government and private schools and other one was-There is no significant difference between the psychosocial adjustment of children with special needs of schools situated in rural and urban areas. Data analysis and interpretation was employed with descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, specifically Mean, Standard Deviation, and the 't' test were applied. The results are presented with discussion.

Keywords—Psychosocial adjustment, Children with Special Needs (CWSN), Middle Stage, Mean, Standard deviation, t-test

I. Introduction

According to the World Health Organization [WHO], health is understood as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not just the absence of disease or infirmity. This definition includes such diverse aspects as physical health, mental health, well-being, and psychosocial adjustment and is consistent with the bio psychosocial model that includes biological, psychological, and social factors to understand health and illness (Engel, 1977). Psychosocial adjustment refers to people's capacity to adapt to the environment, which implies that the individual has sufficient mechanisms to feel good, integrate, respond adequately to the demands of the environment, and achieve his or her objectives (Madariaga et al., 2014). Learning disabilities add another layer of complexity to the psychosocial adjustment of children. According to American Psychological Association children with special needs are those children who require special education, specialized healthcare, or other functional needs or services. Such children may have developmental, learning, intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional, and/or behavioural disabilities. Children with special needs show many behavioural and emotional disturbances such as withdrawal, depression, and poor self-esteem. These disorders affect various cognitive abilities from language comprehension to attention coordination, often remaining unnoticed until school age. Despite being lifelong conditions, they can be managed with proper support. However, students with learning disabilities still face barriers.

II. Need, Significance, Objectives and Hypothesis of the Study

Studying the psychosocial adjustment of children with special needs during the middle stage is crucial for understanding their developmental trajectory and identifying effective interventions. This stage is marked by significant cognitive, social, and emotional growth, making it a pivotal period for children with special needs. Children with learning disabilities may struggle academically, leading to negative perceptions of themselves compared to their peers. Most classrooms have children with specific learning disabilities who need continuous support. Research is clear that the earlier such support begins, the better the chances of progress. Teachers must be helped to identify such learning disabilities early and plan specifically for their mitigation (National Education Policy 2020 p27 6.13). The significance of this study stems from two aspects. First, from the scientific aspect, the value of the results of the study lies in identifying the level of psychological, emotional and social adjustment of students with learning disabilities in the region. This study links psychological, emotional and social adjustment to its impact on students with learning disabilities. The practical aspect, as this study opens a field for future research that is interested in alleviating psychological and social anxiety among students with learning disabilities. The results are expected to benefit interested researchers by providing them with a theoretical background on the relationship between psychological and social anxiety and learning disabilities. Results will provide the literature with an important measure to determine the level of psychological and social adjustment to be used by

researchers and specialists to identify the problems experienced by their students. In the few studies that examine psychosocial adjustment of children with special needs, there is some evidence that individuals with learning disability are at much greater risk for personality disturbance and behaviour problems. Therefore, this study is essential for understanding their experiences, improving support services, enhancing educational outcomes, promoting quality of life, informing policy and practice, and fostering greater inclusion and acceptance in society.

It is very important to determine the objectives of any research work to reach the goal and finalize it. The objectives of this study were- a) to compare the psychosocial adjustment of children with special needs of government and private schools and b) To compare the psychosocial adjustment of children with special needs of schools established in urban and rural areas. Hypotheses are the tentative solution to the problem.

Investigators has formulated two hypotheses a) There is no significant difference between the psychosocial adjustment of children with special needs studying in government and private schools b) There is no significant difference between the psychosocial adjustment of children with special needs of schools situated in rural and urban areas.

III. Research Methodology

This study investigates the Psychosocial Adjustment of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) during the middle stage (grades 6–8, ages 11–14). For the present study, descriptive research and survey method is used by the researcher. Descriptive research, also known as statistical research, describes data and characteristics about the population or phenomenon being studied. Using descriptive research design and survey method, the study is delimited to government and private schools across rural and urban areas of the Ajmer district of Rajasthan, India. 400 students were selected for this study based on stratified sampling method. This sample is divided between rural (200) and urban (200) sectors, further split into government (100) and private (100) schools, and balanced across genders (50 male and 50 female students). The present study has delimitations a) Study is limited to the children who are studying in class 6th, 7th and 8th. b) Study is limited to schools of rural and urban area of Ajmer district and c) Study is limited to government and private schools of Ajmer district only.

Psychosocial Adjustment Inventory (PSI) for CWSNs

The Psychosocial Adjustment Inventory for Children with Special Needs (CWSN) at Middle stage is developed by the researcher. It is a standardized psychometric instrument designed to evaluate the multi-dimensional adjustment patterns of CWSN at the middle school stage. Recognizing that school adjustment is a critical determinant of academic retention and psychological well-being for exceptional children, this tool provides a structured framework for educators and researchers to identify specific areas where a child requires targeted intervention. The tool comprises 60 items systematically distributed across four distinct behavioural and environmental domains, with 15 items dedicated to each. The domains are as follows-

- Emotional Adjustment (Q1–Q15): Measures self-regulation, affective stability, and coping mechanisms.
- Social Adjustment (Q16–Q30): Assesses peer relationships, social integration, and interpersonal interactions within the school environment.
- Academic Adjustment (Q31–Q45): Evaluates classroom engagement, learning attitudes, and adaptation to scholastic demands.
- Psychological Adjustment (Q46–Q60): Gauges self-concept, resilience, and subjective well-being.

The tool utilizes a 3-point Likert scale with response options of Always, Sometimes, and Never. To minimize response bias, the tool incorporates both positive and negative items scored inversely. To establish the psychometric robustness, item efficacy, and internal consistency of the instrument, an initial tryout was conducted on a sample of N=120 middle school students. The data gathered from this pilot administration was subjected to rigorous item analysis and statistical validation using two distinct methodologies: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient and Rulon's Split-Half Formula.

1. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient: The tool demonstrated high internal consistency across the sample. For the overall sample (N = 120), the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of reliability was found to be 0.757. Furthermore, when the sample was categorized into high and low groups for item analysis, the instrument has yielded alpha coefficient reliability as 0.753. Hence the Psychosocial Adjustment Inventory for CWSN at Middle stage is reliable.

2. Split-Half Reliability (Rulon's Formula): To measure the equivalence and internal reliability across split halves, the 60-item test was divided into equal halves using the odd-even item distribution method. The standard deviation was calculated as 5.268 for the odd items and 5.011 for the even items, with a total test standard deviation of 9.217. Applying Rulon's Formula which utilizes the variance of the differences between the two halves, the split-half reliability coefficient yielded an exceptional value of 0.774 for the total tryout sample, and remained highly stable at 0.755 when evaluated across the lower and higher item-analysis sub-groups. With reliability indices consistently exceeding the standard acceptable threshold of 0.70 across both statistical treatments, these findings confirm that the Psychosocial Adjustment Inventory is an objective, stable, and highly reliable instrument for assessing the adjustment profiles of children with special needs at the middle stage.

IV. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table No. 1

Mean, SD & t – values of total sample of Children with Special Needs at the Middle stage on Psychosocial Adjustment Inventory

S. No.	Dimensions	Mean	SD	Maximum Score	Minimum Score	t-value
1.	Total Psychosocial Adjustment	77.295	10.467	103	50	33.046
2.	Emotional Adjustment	18.585	3.049	27	11	23.514
3.	Social Adjustment	19.883	3.621	27	12	26.966
4.	Academic Adjustment	19.563	3.655	28	12	24.964
5.	Psychological Adjustment	19.265	3.347	27	11	25.483

From the above table, it can be observed that the Psychosocial adjustment of the Children with Special Needs at the Middle stage, the total mean score is 77.295 and SD is 10.467. The maximum obtained score of Psychosocial Adjustment Inventory is 103 and the minimum obtained score of children is 50. The average score calculated to be 60. The calculated single group t-test value is 33.046 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. Therefore, the total sample of students has significantly above average level of psychosocial adjustment.

Table No. 2

Mean, SD & t – values of Children of Government institutions and Children of Private institutions on Psychosocial Adjustment Inventory

S. No.	Dimensions	Government Institutions (N=200)		Private Institutions (N=200)		t-value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1.	Total Psychosocial Adjustment	77.390	10.568	77.200	10.365	0.182*
2.	Emotional Adjustment	18.710	3.086	18.460	3.006	0.821*
3.	Social Adjustment	19.730	3.443	20.035	3.785	0.843*
4.	Academic Adjustment	19.585	3.769	19.540	3.538	0.123*
5.	Psychological Adjustment	19.365	3.372	19.165	3.319	0.598*

*=P<0.05

From the above table, it is evident that the comparison of Psychosocial adjustment of the Children with Special Needs at the Middle stage of Government and Private institutions, the total mean score of Government institutions is 77.390 and SD is 10.568 and the total mean score of Private institutions is 77.200 and SD is 10.365 and the calculated t – value of this two group is 0.182. The calculated t – value is less than the table value which is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that students of Government institution possess higher attitude than the students of Private institution. So the difference in Psychosocial adjustment of Children with Special Needs of Government and Private institution is not significant. Hence, the Null Hypothesis that 'There is no significant difference in the psychosocial adjustment of children with special needs in government and private schools' is not rejected.

Fig.1

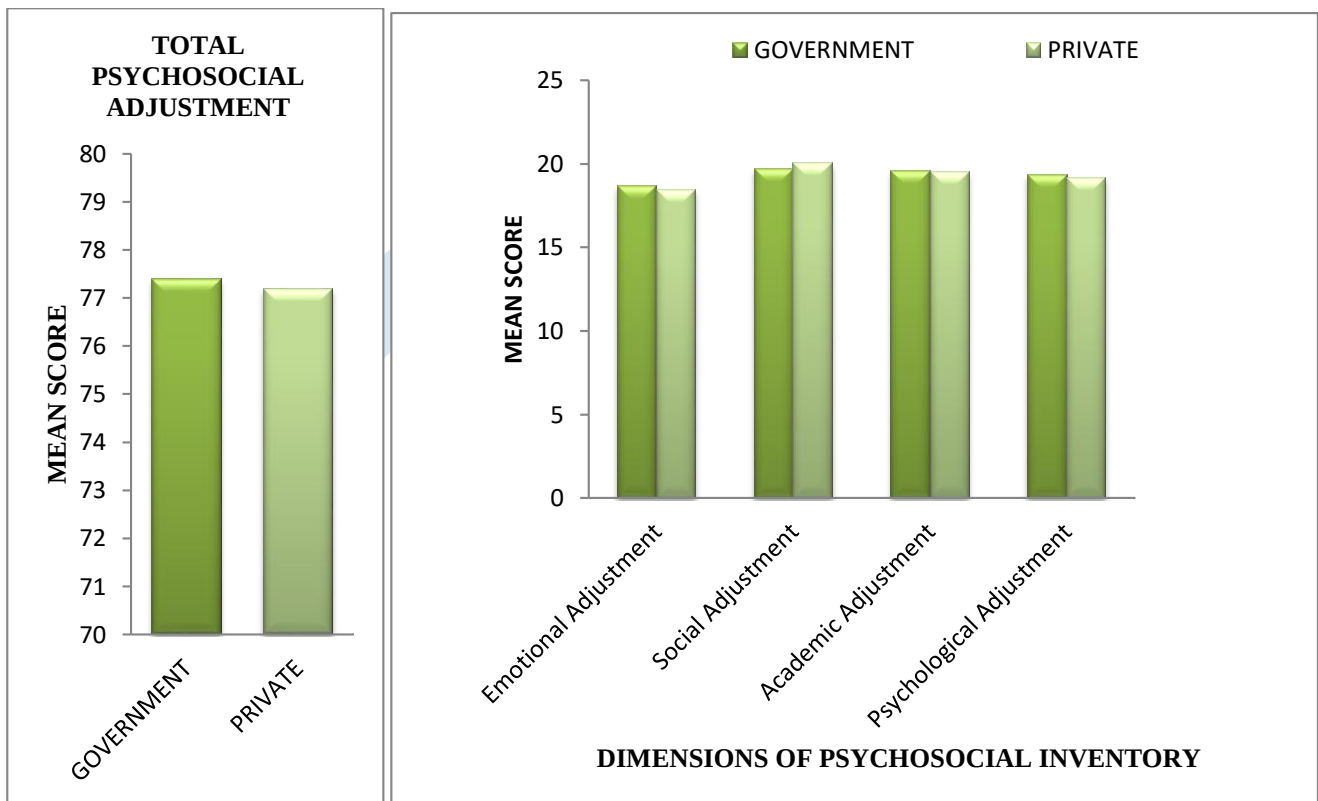


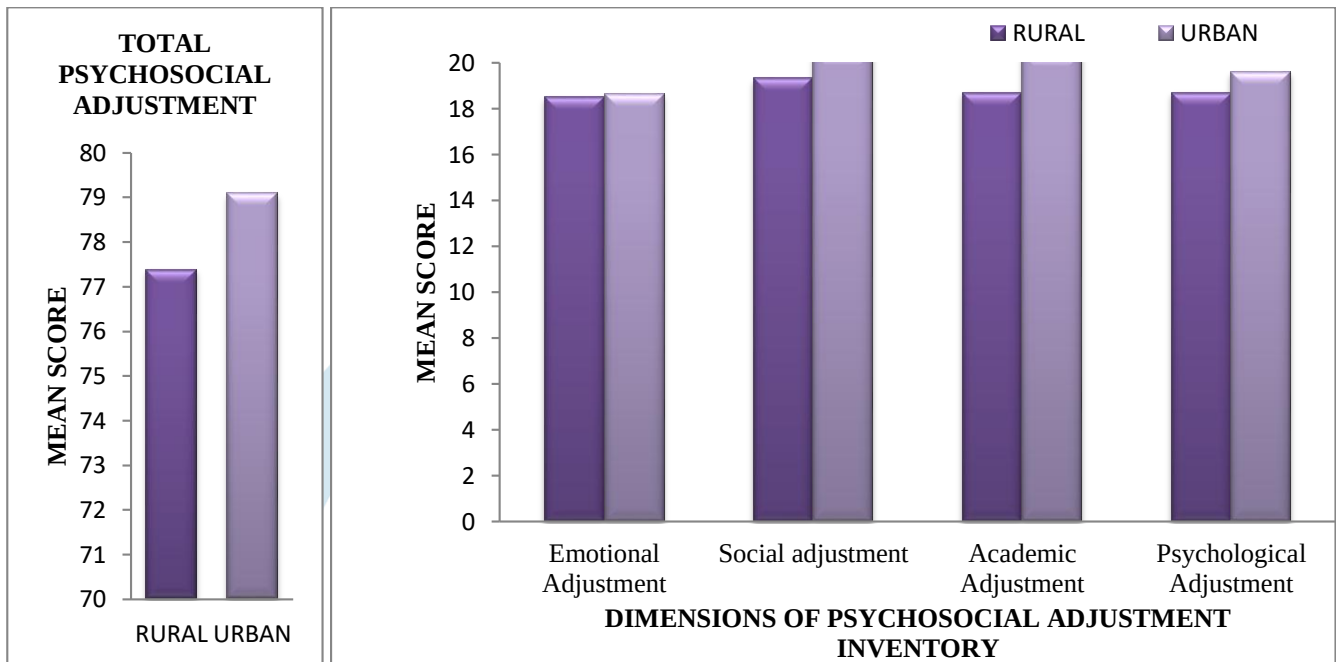
Table No. 3
Mean, SD & t – values of rural area and urban area on Psychosocial Adjustment Inventory

*=P<0.05 , **=P<0.01

S. No.	Dimensions	Rural Area (N=200)		Urban Area (N=200)		t-value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1.	Total Psychosocial Adjustment	75.500	9.398	79.090	11.152	3.481**
2.	Emotional Adjustment	18.525	3.167	18.645	2.926	0.394
3.	Social adjustment	19.340	3.576	20.425	3.585	3.030**
4.	Academic Adjustment	18.725	3.093	20.400	3.969	4.708**
5.	Psychological Adjustment	18.910	3.416	19.620	3.238	2.133*

The t-test conducted to compare the psychosocial adjustment of children based on their locality (Rural vs. Urban) reveals significant differences in most areas. For the Total Score, looking at the specific dimensions: Dimension A: There is no significant difference between rural and urban children ($t=0.394$). Dimensions B, C, and D: The absolute t-values (3.030, 4.708, and 2.133 respectively) are all well above 1.97, showing highly significant differences that consistently favour urban students. Based on these results, the null hypothesis stating that 'There is no significant difference in the psychosocial adjustment of children with special needs in schools established in rural and urban areas' must be rejected for the total score and dimensions B, C, and D. It is concluded that children belonging to urban areas exhibit significantly higher psychosocial adjustment compared to their rural areas.

Fig. 2



VII. Conclusion of the Study

The primary objective of the present investigation was to assess the status of psychosocial adjustment among Children with Special Needs (CWSN) at the middle stage, and to explore variations across demographic segments, namely geographical locality (Rural vs. Urban) and institutional management type (Government vs. Private). Based on the empirical findings and statistical analyses, the following conclusions are drawn:

- The total sample of Children with Special Needs exhibits a high performance across all dimensions of the Psychosocial Adjustment Inventory. Looking at the independent dimensions, Social Adjustment yielded the highest mean score (19.883, $t = 26.966$), followed closely by Academic Adjustment (19.563, $t = 24.964$) and Psychological Adjustment (19.265, $t = 25.483$). Emotional Adjustment registered the lowest baseline mean score among the dimensions (18.585, $t = 23.514$). This indicates that middle school CWSN are navigating their social and academic environments reasonably well, emotional coping mechanisms remain the most vulnerable area requiring targeted attention.
- The geographical location of the students plays a significant role in shaping their psychosocial adjustment, with urban students consistently outperforming their rural counterparts in almost all domains. Demography significantly impacts specific domains: Social Adjustment, Academic Adjustment, and Psychological Adjustment all showed statistically significant variations favouring urban students.
- Conversely, Emotional Adjustment yielded a negligible, non-significant difference. This proves that emotional vulnerabilities are universally shared by middle school CWSN, irrespective of whether they reside in rural or urban environments. However, better access to infrastructure, resources, and civic exposure in urban sectors significantly boosts their academic, social, and psychological adaptive capabilities.
- In contrast to geographical locality, school management type has virtually no bearing on the adjustment metrics of these students. It is therefore concluded that the institutional ecosystem—whether state-run or privately funded—does not act as a differentiating factor in the psychosocial adjustment of middle school CWSN. Both systems appear to offer equivalent environments regarding student coping structures and experiences.

VII. Implications & scope for further research

To synthesize these findings, data explicitly demonstrates that where a child lives (rural vs. urban) matters profoundly, whereas the type of school they attend (government vs. private) does not. The findings of this study provide critical insights for policymakers, special educators, and school administrators by demonstrating that geographical location, rather than school management type, is the primary driver of disparities in the psychosocial adjustment of middle school Children with Special Needs (CWSN). This underscores an urgent need to design and implement targeted socio-educational interventions, counseling facilities, and resource allocation specifically tailored for rural educational setups to bridge the rural urban divide. Additionally, since emotional adjustment emerged as a universal vulnerability across all groups, school curriculums should uniformly integrate structured emotional coping and mental health modules. For future investigators, this research serves as a foundational baseline to conduct longitudinal studies tracking how these adjustment levels evolve as CWSN transition into higher secondary education. Furthermore, future researchers can expand upon these findings by conducting qualitative mixed-method studies to explore the specific socio-cultural and environmental factors that cause rural CWSN to lag behind their urban counterparts.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CWSN- Children with Special Needs
 SD- Standard Deviation
 PSI- Psychosocial Adjustment Inventory

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