

Comparison of Self-esteem, Educational Interest and Adjustment between Public & Private School Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study was carried out on 200 high school students equally divided into public and private schools. The objectives were to make a comparison between students of public and private schools in terms of self-esteem, educational stress and school adjustment respectively. It was hypothesized that students of public and private schools would differ significantly in terms of (i) self-esteem, (ii) educational stress and (iii) school adjustment respectively. For the purpose, the students were administered Self-esteem Scale, Educational Stress Scale and HSAI to measure self-esteem, educational stress and school adjustment respectively. Besides these, a PDS was administered to seek their personal information. The obtained data were analysed using t-test. The findings supported the hypotheses. It was found that students of private schools excelled over the students of public schools in terms of self-esteem and school adjustment. However, students of private school were found more exposed to educational stress. Thus, it was concluded that nature of schooling significantly influence self-esteem, educational stress and school adjustment amongst school students. Thus, self-esteem, educational stress and school adjustment all are functions of nature of schooling.

Keywords: Self- esteem, Educational Interest, Adjustment, Public School, Private School

Introduction:

The intersection of self-esteem, educational stress, and school adjustment is critical to understanding the well-being and academic outcomes of students. These three factors, while complex, significantly influence students' experiences and success in school, yet their interplay remains underexplored in many contexts, especially when comparing students from public and private schools. Both types of schools are unique in their structure, resources, and educational environment, and these differences can have profound effects on students' academic experiences, emotional health, and social integration. By examining how students in public and private schools navigate the challenges of educational stress, how their self-esteem is affected, and how they adjust to school environments, we can gain valuable insights into the broader context of educational inequalities and the factors that contribute to academic success. Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall sense of self-worth or personal value. In the context of students, self-esteem is deeply influenced by their school environment, peer interactions, and academic

experiences. On the other hand, students with low self-esteem may avoid challenges, struggle with social interactions, and experience greater levels of stress and anxiety.

The school environment plays a significant role in shaping self-esteem. In public schools, where student populations tend to be more diverse in terms of socioeconomic background, academic ability, and family circumstances, students may encounter a wider range of social dynamics and stressors. These schools are often characterized by larger class sizes, fewer resources, and less individualized attention, which can result in a more competitive and, at times, overwhelming atmosphere for students. In contrast, private schools often offer a more homogeneous environment with more resources, smaller class sizes, and greater emphasis on individualized learning and extracurricular activities. These differences may affect students' experiences of self-esteem. Private school students may benefit from a more supportive environment that fosters higher self-esteem, while public school students may face challenges related to

economic disparity and a lack of resources that can negatively impact their self-worth.

Educational stress refers to the psychological strain that students experience due to academic demands and pressures. In today's highly competitive academic environment, stress has become an increasingly prevalent issue among students of all ages. Educational stress manifests in various forms, including anxiety over academic performance, pressure to meet high expectations, and the fear of failure. While some level of stress is normal and can even motivate students to achieve, chronic or excessive stress can have debilitating effects on both mental and physical health, impairing students' cognitive abilities, social functioning, and overall well-being.

The sources of educational stress are varied and can depend on several factors, including academic workload, teacher expectations, peer pressure, and family dynamics. In public schools, students may face additional stress due to larger class sizes, less access to educational support, and the challenges of navigating diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Many students in public schools come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and financial pressures on families may exacerbate the stress experienced by these students. This strain can be compounded by limited resources and the pressures of standardized testing, which can negatively affect both self-esteem and school adjustment.

In private schools, while the resources and support systems are generally more robust, students may still face significant stress due to high academic expectations, a more competitive environment, and pressure from parents to excel. Additionally, the financial cost of attending private school can add another layer of stress for both students and families, particularly when students feel the weight of fulfilling the expectations associated with attending a prestigious institution. Although the level of educational stress may be perceived differently in public and private school settings, both groups of students face pressures that can adversely affect their mental health, school adjustment, and overall academic success. School adjustment refers to the process by which students adapt to the social, academic, and emotional demands of school life. Successful school adjustment is associated with positive outcomes, including academic

success, social integration, and emotional well-being. For students, school adjustment involves not only coping with academic challenges but also navigating social relationships with peers and teachers, managing extracurricular commitments, and adapting to the school culture. Students in public schools may experience challenges in adjusting to the school environment due to factors such as larger class sizes, less individualized attention, and a more diverse student body. These factors can make it difficult for students to find a sense of belonging and to develop positive relationships with peers and teachers. Additionally, public school students may encounter barriers to academic success, such as lack of resources, outdated facilities, and limited access to extracurricular opportunities. These challenges can make school adjustment more difficult, leading to feelings of alienation and disengagement.

In contrast, private schools often offer a more personalized and supportive environment, which can facilitate easier school adjustment for students. Smaller class sizes, more resources, and a focus on individualized learning can create an atmosphere in which students feel more connected to their peers and teachers. Private schools also often have a strong emphasis on extracurricular activities, which can help students build friendships, develop leadership skills, and gain confidence. However, the pressure to excel academically and socially in private schools can still create challenges for students, especially when they feel the weight of high expectations and competition.

While students in both public and private schools face challenges related to self-esteem, educational stress, and school adjustment, the nature of these challenges can differ based on the resources, academic rigor, and social environment unique to each type of school. Public schools, with their diverse student populations and often limited resources, may contribute to higher levels of educational stress and difficulties in school adjustment, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In contrast, private schools, with their smaller class sizes, greater access to resources, and more homogeneous student populations, may offer a more supportive environment but also create competitive pressures that affect students' self-esteem and school adjustment.

In conclusion, self-esteem, educational stress,

and school adjustment are critical components of students' experiences in school. The differences between public and private schools in terms of resources, academic rigor, and social dynamics significantly shape how students navigate these factors. By exploring these differences, we can gain a deeper understanding of how to better support students' academic success, emotional well-being, and overall school experiences, regardless of the type of school they attend.

Review of Literature:

Rosenthal & Jacobson⁹ (1968) found that students' self-esteem significantly impacts academic achievement. It showed that students in private schools often exhibit higher self-esteem due to smaller class sizes and greater teacher attention. Conversely, public school students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, may experience lower self-esteem because of larger class sizes and fewer resources. Tao et al.¹⁰ (2000) found that students in private schools experienced greater academic pressure due to higher expectations, both from teachers and parents. On the other hand, students in public schools reported higher levels of stress due to large class sizes, lack of resources, and socio-economic disparities, which contributed to a more stressful school environment. Rosenberg⁸ (1989) suggested that students' school adjustment is deeply intertwined with emotional well-being and self-esteem. Private school students often have better school adjustment due to the structured environment and individualized attention, which enhances emotional well-being. Public school students may struggle with adjustment due to overcrowded classrooms and socio-economic challenges, which can hinder emotional and social development. It was found that private school students, who often . Wentzell¹¹ (1998), the quality of teacher-student relationships is a significant predictor of school adjustment. Private school students tend to have better relationships with teachers due to smaller class sizes and more personalized attention. This, in turn, facilitates easier school adjustment. In contrast, public school students, especially those in overcrowded classrooms, may struggle with building strong relationships with teachers, affecting their adjustment.

Goodenow⁶ (1993) highlighted the role of peer

relationships in school adjustment. Private schools, with their more homogenous student populations, may foster stronger peer bonds, leading to a positive school climate and better adjustment. Public school students, however, may experience difficulties in establishing peer relationships due to the more diverse social environment and less supportive structures. Harter⁷ (1999) noted that academic pressures in both public and private schools affect students' self-esteem, but in different ways. Private school students often face intense academic pressure, which can lead to high stress levels and a decrease in self-esteem if they feel they cannot meet expectations. In public schools, academic stress is compounded by external factors like socio-economic challenges, which can lead to even lower self-esteem and academic disengagement. Epstein⁵ (2001) revealed that parental involvement is a key factor in students' school adjustment. Private school students typically have more engaged parents due to the financial and personal investment in education. This involvement positively influences self-esteem and adjustment. Private schools, with more resources, tend to offer a wider range of extracurricular activities, which support students' emotional and social development, improving both their self-esteem and school adjustment. Public school students may not have the same access to extracurriculars, limiting opportunities for social interaction and personal growth. Compas et al.² (2001) examined how students cope with academic stress. Private school students tend to employ more adaptive coping mechanisms, such as seeking support from teachers and peers, due to their more supportive school environment. Public school students, however, may develop maladaptive coping strategies, like disengagement or avoidance, due to higher levels of stress and fewer support systems in place. According to Baker¹ (2006), the availability of school resources, such as counseling, tutoring, and extracurricular programs, plays a significant role in students' adjustment to school. Private schools tend to have better access to these resources, promoting higher levels of school adjustment and better emotional well-being. Public schools, often underfunded, may have limited resources, making it harder for students to adjust to school life, leading to greater stress and lower self-esteem.

The literature suggests that self-esteem, educational stress, and school adjustment are

influenced by a range of factors, including school type, resources, teacher-student relationships, socioeconomic status, and peer support. Private schools tend to offer a more supportive environment that positively influences self-esteem and school adjustment, while public schools often face challenges related to overcrowding, fewer resources, and more diverse student populations. These differences highlight the need for tailored approaches to supporting students in both public and private schools to improve their overall academic experience and emotional well-being. However, there are shortage of studies relating to variables under references. Hence, the study.

Objectives:

The study intended to make a comparison between students of public and private schools in terms of self-esteem, educational stress and school adjustment.

Hypothesis:

1. The students of public and private schools would differ significantly in terms of self-esteem.
2. Students of public and private high schools would differ significantly in terms of educational stress.
3. There would be significant difference in school adjustment between students of public and private schools.

Method of study :

Sample used

The sample comprised of 200 high school students selected from among the high schools of Patna based on incidental-cum-purposive sampling technique. They were selected equally in respect of nature of institution and sex-difference (Private schools: 100; Boys: 50; Girls: 50; Public schools: 100; Boys: 50; Girls: 50). Other than the conditions required, they were matched so far as practicable.

Tools Used:

1. Personal Data Sheet was used to seek the personal information about the student respondents.
2. Self-esteem Scale by Minakshi Biswal was used to measure self-esteem of the respondents.
3. Student Problem Inventory by Bandami H.B. was used to measure educational stress of the respondents.
4. High School Adjustment Inventory by Singh and Sen Gupta was used to measure the school adjustment amongst students.

Results and Interpretations

Table-1

Comparison between students of public and private schools on the measure of self-esteem.

| Schools | N | Mean | SD | t-value | df | P |
|---------|-----|-------|------|---------|-----|------|
| Private | 100 | 92.46 | 5.19 | 6.32 | 198 | <.01 |
| Public | 100 | 87.78 | 5.40 | | | |

The results displayed by table-01 clearly revealed that high school students of private schools excelled (Mean=92.46) over students of public schools (Mean=87.78) on the measure of self-esteem. The t-value showing the significance of difference was found significant ($t = 6.32$; $df = 198$; $p < .01$). Students of private schools often excel in self-esteem over their public-school counterparts due to a combination of favorable factors. Private schools typically offer smaller class sizes, individualized attention, and enriched extracurricular opportunities, which help students feel valued and supported. Additionally, better resources, disciplined environments, and higher parental involvement contribute to a sense of competence and self-worth. The competitive yet nurturing atmosphere in private schools often fosters academic confidence and social skills, further boosting students' self-esteem. In contrast, public schools may face challenges like overcrowding, limited resources, and less personalized attention, which can negatively impact students' self-perception and confidence.

Table-2

Comparison between students of public and private schools on the measure of educational stress.

| Schools | N | Mean | SD | t-value | df | P |
|---------|-----|-------|------|---------|-----|------|
| Private | 100 | 44.19 | 5.42 | 5.42 | 198 | <.01 |
| Public | 100 | 40.07 | 5.37 | | | |

The results displayed by table-02 clearly indicate the dominance of students of private school (Mean=44.19) on educational stress measure as compared to the students of public schools (Mean=40.07). The difference of means was found significant ($t = 5.42$; $df = 198$; $p < .01$). Students of private schools often experience higher educational stress compared to their public-school counterparts due to heightened academic expectations, competitive environments, and pressure to excel in standardized

tests. Parents in private schools tend to have higher academic aspirations for their children, which adds to the burden. Additionally, private institutions frequently emphasize performance, discipline, and extracurricular achievements, leaving students with limited leisure time and increased anxiety. The fear of failure, peer comparison, and the pursuit of excellence contribute significantly to elevated stress levels. In contrast, public schools may offer a relatively less pressurized academic environment with moderate expectations.

Table-3

Mean, SD and t-value showing comparison between students of public and private schools on the measure of school adjustment.

| Schools | N | Mean | SD | t-value | df | P |
|---------|-----|-------|------|---------|-----|------|
| Private | 100 | 26.24 | 5.51 | 5.02 | 198 | <.01 |
| Public | 100 | 22.37 | 5.39 | | | |

The results displayed by table-03 clearly visualized the superiority of means of students of private schools (Mean=26.24) over students of government or public schools (Mean=22.37) on the measure of school adjustment dimension of high school adjustment inventory. The t-ratio showing the significance of difference between the means was found significant ($t = 5.02$; $df = 198$; $p < .01$). Thus, hypothesis 3 was supported. Students of private schools often excel in school adjustment compared to public school students due to better infrastructure, smaller class sizes, and more individualized attention from teachers. Private schools typically provide a structured and supportive environment with abundant resources for academics, sports, and co-curricular activities, which fosters holistic development. Additionally, consistent teacher-student interaction and effective counseling services enhance emotional and social adjustment.

Conclusions:

1. Students of private schools excelled over the students of public schools on self-esteem measure.
2. Private school students are more pronned to educational stress as compared to students of public schools.
3. Private school & public schools students are comparatively better adjustment than students

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