

# Influence Of Socio-Economic Status Of Parents On Social Adjustment Of Adolescents: An Empirical Study Of Indore District

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## Abstract

**Background:** The socio-economic status (SES) of the family is widely regarded as one of the most influential contextual factors shaping adolescent psychosocial development, yet empirical evidence on its relationship with social adjustment among Indian adolescents remains limited, particularly in the central Indian region.

**Objectives:** The present study was undertaken (i) to examine the relationship between the socio-economic status of parents and the social adjustment of adolescents, and (ii) to compare the social adjustment of adolescents belonging to high and low socio-economic status groups, in Indore district, Madhya Pradesh.

**Method:** A descriptive survey design was employed. Using stratified random sampling, a sample of 200 adolescents (100 boys and 100 girls; 100 from government schools and 100 from private schools) aged 14 to 19 years was drawn from secondary schools of Indore district. Data on parental socio-economic status and adolescent social adjustment (covering family, peer, school, social behaviour, and emotional-situational dimensions) were analysed using Pearson's product-moment correlation, the independent-samples t-test, and one-way ANOVA. **Results:** A strong, statistically significant positive correlation was found between parental SES and adolescent social adjustment ( $r = .78, p < .001$ ). Adolescents from high-SES families scored significantly higher on social adjustment ( $M = 123.65, SD = 10.94$ ) than those from low-SES families ( $M = 85.63, SD = 12.60$ ),  $t(23.1) = 10.58, p < .001$ , with a very large effect size (Cohen's  $d = 3.33$ ). A one-way ANOVA across five SES levels further confirmed a significant overall effect ( $F(4,195) = 60.11, p < .001, \eta^2 = .55$ ). **Conclusion:** Parental socio-economic status emerges as a strong and consistent predictor of adolescent social adjustment in the Indore urban-semiurban context. The findings underscore the need for school-based compensatory and counselling interventions targeted at adolescents from economically disadvantaged families.

**Keywords:** Socio-economic status; social adjustment; adolescents; parents; Indore district; secondary school students

## Introduction

Adolescence represents one of the most formative and turbulent stages of human development, marked by rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social change. During this stage, the adolescent is required to negotiate new roles within the family, the peer group, the school, and the wider society, and the ease or difficulty with which this negotiation occurs is generally described by psychologists as social adjustment. Social adjustment refers to the individual's capacity to establish a harmonious relationship with the social environment, meeting the demands and expectations of family, peers, school, and community while maintaining a stable and satisfying sense of self (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Adolescents who are well adjusted socially tend to display cooperative behaviour, emotional stability, and a healthy pattern of interpersonal relationships, whereas poorly adjusted adolescents are more prone to loneliness, conduct problems, academic difficulty, and emotional disturbance.

Among the many family-level factors that influence adolescent development, the socio-economic status (SES) of parents occupies a central position. SES is a composite construct that is typically indexed through parental education, occupation, and family income, and it determines the material, social, and psychological resources that are available to a

growing child (Diemer et al., 2013). Family systems and ecological theories of development suggest that SES does not influence the adolescent directly, but operates through the quality of parenting, the emotional climate of the home, the neighbourhood and school environment, and the opportunities for social participation that are made available to the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Evans, 2004). Adolescents raised in families of higher socio-economic standing generally have greater access to enriching social experiences, structured extracurricular participation, better-resourced schools, and lower chronic stress within the household — all of which are conducive to healthy social adjustment. Conversely, economic hardship has repeatedly been associated with parental stress, inconsistent discipline, and reduced parental monitoring, all of which can compromise an adolescent's social and emotional functioning.

India presents a particularly relevant context in which to examine this relationship, given the wide socio-economic disparities that exist even within a single urban district, where adolescents from government and private schooling systems often come from markedly different family backgrounds. Indore, the largest city of Madhya Pradesh and an important educational hub of central India, brings together

adolescents from a broad spectrum of socio-economic backgrounds within its government and private secondary schools, making it a suitable site for examining how parental SES relates to the social adjustment of adolescents. Despite this, empirical studies that directly link parental SES with social adjustment — as distinct from academic achievement, personality, or emotional intelligence — remain relatively scarce in the central Indian context. The present study was therefore designed to address this gap by empirically examining the influence of parental socio-economic status on the social adjustment of adolescents studying in government and private secondary schools of Indore district.

## 2. Review of Literature

A growing body of research, both in India and internationally, has examined the relationship between family socio-economic circumstances and various dimensions of adolescent adjustment. Gupta and Dutt (2026), working with a sample of 200 adolescents from government and private secondary schools of Indore, reported that adolescents from high-SES families scored significantly higher on adaptive personality traits such as openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness, and significantly lower on neuroticism, than their low-SES counterparts, concluding that parental SES is a robust predictor of adolescent personality formation in the urban Indian context.

Naushad (2022), studying 858 adolescents of Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh, found that both socio-economic status and family environment exerted a significant effect on emotional intelligence, academic stress, and academic achievement, with post-hoc comparisons confirming that adolescents from different SES groups differed meaningfully on these outcomes. Similarly, Sasikumar and Nagooran (2021), in a study of 200 secondary school adolescents of Ramanathapuram district, Tamil Nadu, reported a positive association between emotional maturity and social adjustment, and observed that adjustment levels varied according to family-related background variables including parental income and education Karinchan (2026).

International evidence points in a similar direction. Azpiazu et al. (2024), in a large-scale study of 1,397 European adolescents, found that social support from teachers and peers, together with resilience and positive affect, predicted school adjustment, highlighting the role of the surrounding social ecology — of which family SES forms a foundational part — in shaping adjustment outcomes. Reviewing evidence on childhood poverty more broadly, Evans (2004) concluded that low-SES children are exposed disproportionately to chronic stressors across the home, school, and neighbourhood environments, with cumulative consequences for socio-emotional functioning. Consistent with this, Diemer et al. (2013) emphasised that SES operates as a multidimensional construct whose components — parental education,

occupation, and income — jointly shape the resources and social opportunities available to a developing adolescent Vaishnav and Dubey (2026).

Taken together, the reviewed literature indicates a consistent, positive association between family socio-economic standing and favourable adolescent outcomes across personality, emotional, and academic domains. Guduza and Tshelane (2026) However, comparatively fewer Indian studies have examined social adjustment specifically — as a composite construct spanning family, peer, school, social-behavioural, and emotional-situational adjustment — in relation to parental SES, and fewer still have done so in the Indore district of Madhya Pradesh. Mawi and Patidar (2026) The present study builds directly on this literature, and in particular on the Indore-based work of Gupta and Dutt (2026), by extending the enquiry from personality to the domain of social adjustment.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

The present study was guided by the following two objectives:

Objective 1: To study the relationship between the socio-economic status of parents and the social adjustment of adolescents of Indore district.

Objective 2: To compare the social adjustment of adolescents belonging to high socio-economic status families with those belonging to low socio-economic status families in Indore district.

## 4. Hypotheses of the Study

On the basis of the above objectives and the reviewed literature, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

**H1:** There is a significant positive relationship between the socio-economic status of parents and the social adjustment of adolescents.

**H2:** There is a significant difference in the social adjustment of adolescents belonging to high socio-economic status families and those belonging to low socio-economic status families.

## 5. Research Methodology

### 5.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey research design, which is well suited to examining relationships and group differences among naturally occurring variables such as socio-economic status and social adjustment, without any experimental manipulation.

### 5.2 Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised adolescent students studying in classes IX to XII in government and private secondary schools of Indore district, Madhya Pradesh. Using a stratified random sampling technique, a final sample of 200 adolescents (100 boys and 100 girls; 100 from government schools and 100 from private schools) in the age range of 14 to 19

years was drawn, so as to ensure adequate representation across gender and school type. The sample was drawn from a larger pool of secondary school students surveyed across ten schools of Indore district.

### 5.3 Tools Used

**1. Socio-Economic Status Scale:** Parental socio-economic status was assessed using a standardised SES scale that yields a composite raw score based on parental education, occupation, and family income, with respondents further classified into five SES categories — Low, Below Average, Average, Above Average, and High.

**2. Social Adjustment Inventory:** Adolescent social

adjustment was measured using a standardised social adjustment inventory covering five sub-dimensions — family adjustment, peer adjustment, school adjustment, social behaviour, and emotional and situational adjustment — which were summed to yield a Social Adjustment Total score for each respondent.

### 5.4 Statistical Techniques

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation), Pearson's product-moment correlation (to test H1), and the independent-samples t-test together with a supplementary one-way ANOVA across all five SES levels (to test H2). All statistical tests were conducted at the 0.05 level of significance.

## 6. Data Analysis and Results

### 6.1 Description of the Sample

Table 1 presents the descriptive characteristics of the sample (N = 200).

| Variable                | N   | Mean   | SD    | Minimum | Maximum |
|-------------------------|-----|--------|-------|---------|---------|
| Age (years)             | 200 | 16.11  | 1.56  | 14      | 19      |
| SES Raw Score           | 200 | 64.30  | 15.04 | 22      | 99      |
| Social Adjustment Total | 200 | 105.12 | 15.34 | 65      | 147     |

Figure 4: Demographic Composition of the Sample

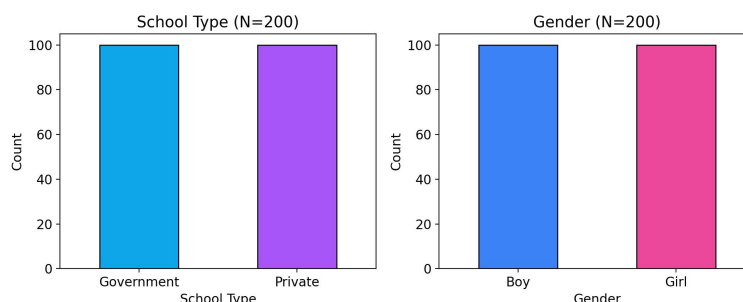
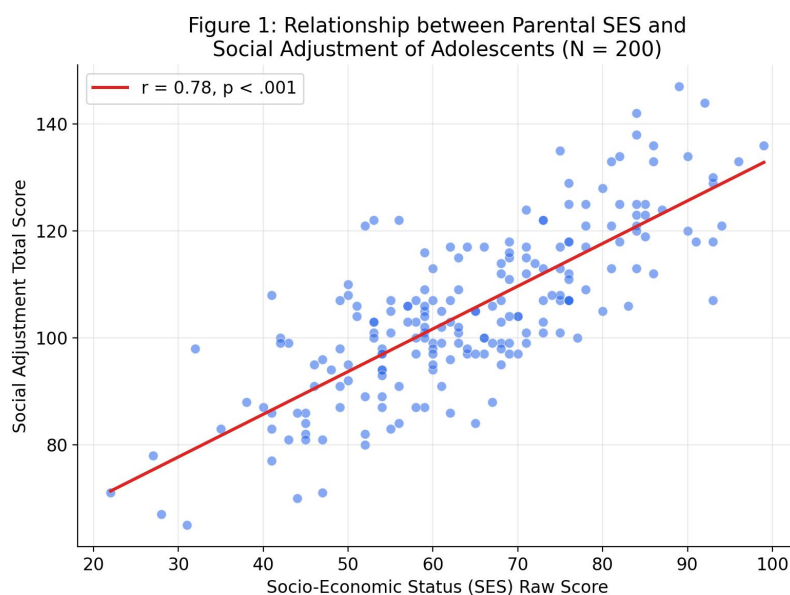


Figure 1. Demographic composition of the sample by school type and gender (N = 200).

### 6.2 Testing of Hypothesis 1: Relationship between SES and Social Adjustment

To test the first hypothesis, Pearson's product-moment correlation was computed between parental SES raw scores and adolescents' Social Adjustment Total scores. A strong, statistically significant positive correlation was obtained ( $r = .78$ ,  $n = 200$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that as parental socio-economic status increases, adolescent social adjustment also increases. SES raw scores accounted for approximately 61% of the variance in social adjustment scores ( $r^2 = .61$ ). Table 2 further presents the correlation of SES with each of the five sub-dimensions of social adjustment.

| Social Adjustment Dimension        | r (with SES) | p-value | Remark      |
|------------------------------------|--------------|---------|-------------|
| Family Adjustment                  | .67          | < .001  | Significant |
| Peer Adjustment                    | .62          | < .001  | Significant |
| School Adjustment                  | .69          | < .001  | Significant |
| Social Behaviour                   | .69          | < .001  | Significant |
| Emotional & Situational Adjustment | .63          | < .001  | Significant |
| Social Adjustment Total            | .78          | < .001  | Significant |



**Figure 2. Scatter plot showing the relationship between parental SES and adolescent social adjustment, with fitted regression line (N = 200).**

Since the obtained correlation ( $r = .78$ ) was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, Hypothesis 1 (H1) stating a significant positive relationship between parental SES and adolescent social adjustment was accepted.

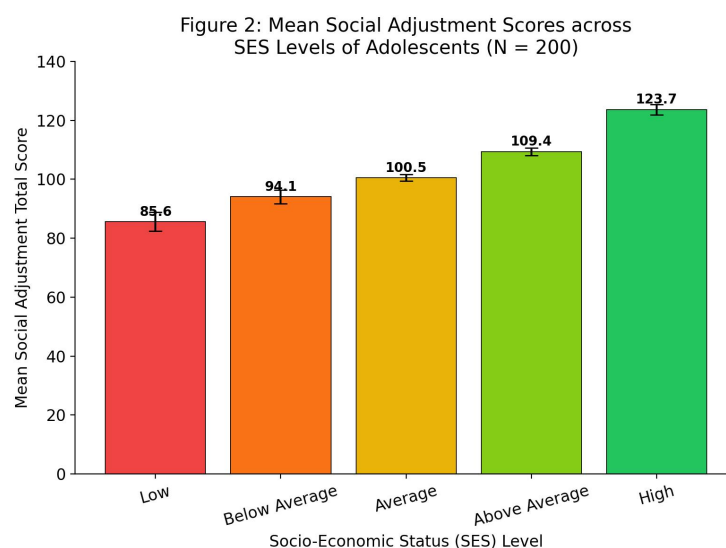
### 6.3 Testing of Hypothesis 2: High vs. Low SES Groups

To test the second hypothesis, an independent-samples t-test was applied to compare the Social Adjustment Total scores of adolescents from high-SES families ( $n = 40$ ) and low-SES families ( $n = 16$ ). As shown in Table 3, adolescents from high-SES families ( $M = 123.65$ ,  $SD = 10.94$ ) scored substantially higher on social adjustment than adolescents from low-SES families ( $M = 85.63$ ,  $SD = 12.60$ ). The difference was statistically significant,  $t(23.1) = 10.58$ ,  $p < .001$ , with a very large effect size (Cohen's  $d = 3.33$ ).

| SES Group | N  | Mean   | SD    | t-value | df   | p-value |
|-----------|----|--------|-------|---------|------|---------|
| High SES  | 40 | 123.65 | 10.94 | 10.58   | 23.1 | < .001  |
| Low SES   | 16 | 85.63  | 12.60 |         |      |         |

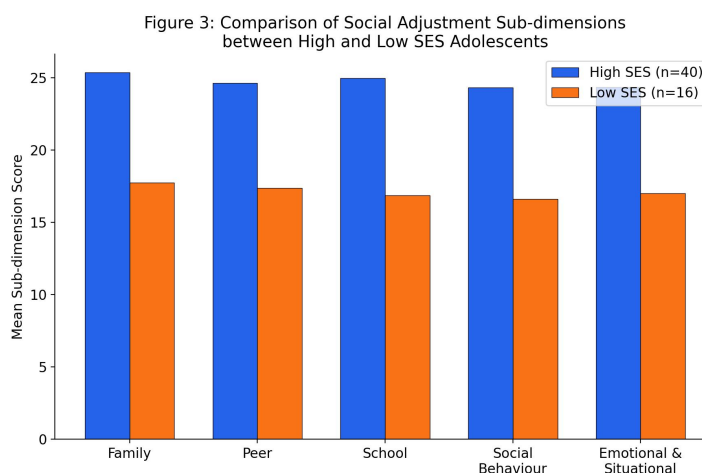
As a supplementary analysis, a one-way ANOVA was also conducted across all five SES levels (Low, Below Average, Average, Above Average, High) to examine whether social adjustment increased systematically with SES level. The ANOVA yielded a highly significant effect,  $F(4, 195) = 60.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .55$ , confirming a graded, monotonic increase in mean social adjustment scores from the lowest to the highest SES group (Table 4, Figure 3).

| SES Level     | N  | Mean   | SD    |
|---------------|----|--------|-------|
| Low           | 16 | 85.63  | 12.60 |
| Below Average | 31 | 94.06  | 12.78 |
| Average       | 64 | 100.52 | 8.63  |
| Above Average | 49 | 109.37 | 9.48  |
| High          | 40 | 123.65 | 10.94 |



**Figure 3. Mean social adjustment scores across five SES levels of adolescents, with standard error bars (N = 200).**

Since the obtained t-value (10.58) was significant well beyond the 0.01 level, Hypothesis 2 (H2) stating a significant difference in social adjustment between high- and low-SES adolescents was accepted.



**Figure 4. Comparison of the five social adjustment sub-dimensions between high-SES and low-SES adolescents.**

Figure 4 further illustrates that the advantage of high-SES adolescents was not confined to any single facet of social adjustment but was consistently observed across family, peer, school, social behaviour, and emotional-situational adjustment sub-dimensions, with the largest gap evident in school adjustment and social behaviour.

## 7. Discussion

The findings of the present study provide clear empirical support for both hypotheses. The strong positive correlation obtained between parental SES and adolescent social adjustment ( $r = .78$ ) is consistent with the ecological perspective that family socio-economic resources shape the broader environment — home, school, and neighbourhood — within which an adolescent's social competencies develop (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Evans, 2004). This finding also converges with the companion Indore-based study of Gupta and Dutt (2026), which reported comparably strong SES associations with adaptive

personality traits in the same district, and with Naushad (2022), who found significant SES-related differences in emotional intelligence and academic stress among adolescents of Aligarh district.

The markedly large difference observed between high-SES and low-SES adolescents (Cohen's  $d = 3.33$ ) suggests that in the Indore context, socio-economic disparity translates into a substantial and consistent gap in adolescents' capacity to adjust to family, peer, school, and emotional demands, rather than a marginal statistical difference. This pattern is broadly in line with international evidence — for instance,

Azpiazu et al. (2024) similarly found that supportive social and interpersonal resources, which tend to be more available to economically advantaged families, predicted better school adjustment among adolescents. The graded, near-linear increase in adjustment scores across the five SES levels observed in the present study (Table 4) further reinforces the interpretation that the SES-adjustment relationship is dose-dependent rather than a simple binary contrast between advantaged and disadvantaged groups.

The consistency of the SES advantage across all five sub-dimensions of social adjustment — rather than being confined to, say, school adjustment alone — suggests that the mechanism through which SES operates is likely to be broad and systemic (encompassing parenting resources, neighbourhood safety, access to structured social opportunities, and reduced chronic family stress) rather than narrowly confined to the school setting alone.

### 8. Educational Implications

On the basis of the present findings, the following implications may be drawn for educators, school counsellors, and policy-makers:

1. Schools serving predominantly low-SES populations may benefit from structured, school-based social skills and adjustment-enhancement programmes, given the substantially lower adjustment scores observed among low-SES adolescents.
2. School counsellors should be sensitised to the socio-economic background of students so that adjustment difficulties are not misattributed solely to individual or personality factors.
3. Government schools, which in the present sample were associated with lower average SES and lower social adjustment scores, may particularly benefit from targeted peer-mentoring and family-engagement initiatives.
4. Since the SES-adjustment gap was evident across all sub-dimensions, compensatory interventions should be comprehensive rather than restricted to the academic or school domain alone.

### 9. Delimitations of the Study

1. The study was delimited to adolescents studying in secondary schools of Indore district, Madhya Pradesh, and the findings may not generalise to rural or other regional contexts.
2. The sample was delimited to 200 adolescents in the age range of 14–19 years.
3. The study relied on self-report measures of social adjustment, which may be subject to social desirability bias.
4. The design was cross-sectional; causal claims regarding the direction of the SES-adjustment relationship cannot be made on this basis alone.

### 10. Conclusion

The present study set out to examine the influence of parental socio-economic status on the social adjustment of adolescents in Indore district. The

results provide strong support for both hypotheses: parental SES was found to be significantly and positively related to adolescent social adjustment, and adolescents from high-SES families showed markedly better social adjustment than those from low-SES families, across every sub-dimension examined. These findings affirm the socio-economic environment of the family as a key determinant of adolescent social functioning and highlight the importance of targeted school- and family-level interventions for adolescents from economically disadvantaged backgrounds in the Indore region.

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