

# Determinants of Student Adjustment at the Secondary School Level: An Analysis of School Organizational Climate, Parents' Educational Background, and Place of Residence

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## Abstract

Secondary-school adjustment is shaped by interactions between adolescents and their school and family environments. This study examined whether perceived school organizational climate, parents' educational background, and place of residence are associated with student adjustment. A quantitative cross-sectional design was modelled using a clearly identified synthetic dataset of 280 secondary-school students; no actual students or schools participated. School climate and adjustment were represented by 5-point Likert-type composite scores, parental education by a five-level ordinal indicator, and residence by urban, semi-urban, and rural categories. Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlations, an independent-samples t-test, one-way ANOVA with Tukey comparisons, and multiple linear regression were applied. School climate showed a strong positive association with adjustment ( $r = .553$ ), parental education showed a smaller positive association ( $r = .220$ ), and adjustment differed by residence,  $F(2, 277) = 6.04$ ,  $p = .003$ . The regression model explained 35.7% of adjustment variance, with school climate the strongest predictor. The findings illustrate how school-level support may offset contextual disadvantage while highlighting the need for real multi-school validation.

**Keywords:** Student Adjustment; School Organizational Climate; Parental Education; Place of Residence; Secondary Education; Student Well-being

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## 1. Introduction

Student adjustment refers to the capacity to meet academic demands, participate constructively in school life, maintain workable peer and teacher relationships, and regulate emotions in response to school-related pressures. At the secondary level, these tasks occur alongside rapid developmental change, higher academic expectations and increasingly complex social relationships. Difficulties during the transition into and through secondary school can appear as disengagement, loneliness, weak school liking or declining achievement (Rice et al., 2021). Conversely, supportive relationships and positive affect are closely linked with better adolescent school adjustment (Azpiazu et al., 2024).

School organizational climate provides an immediate institutional context for adjustment. It includes students' perceptions of teacher support, peer respect, safety, communication, fairness of rules, opportunities to participate, school belonging and the learning environment. Recent longitudinal and intervention evidence links positive climate and connectedness with social-emotional health and lower psychological risk (Singla et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2021; Leurent et al., 2021; Raniti et al., 2022). An Indian systematic review likewise identifies relationships, safety, belonging and academic climate as recurring correlates of

adolescent emotional and academic outcomes (Podiya et al., 2025).

Family background may operate simultaneously. Parents with more education can have greater familiarity with schooling, academic language and educational pathways, although educational attainment is not equivalent to effective involvement. Studies show that parental academic socialization, support and involvement can promote engagement and adaptation, while their effects vary by developmental stage and form of involvement (Wei et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2024). Place of residence can also structure access to facilities, digital resources, transport and psychosocial opportunities; urban-rural differences in adolescent health and anxiety have been reported, but they are context-dependent rather than inherently directional (Anjum et al., 2022; Jiménez Boraita et al., 2022). The research gap is therefore not whether any single context matters, but how school climate, parental education and residence operate together when predicting adjustment.

## Research Objectives

1. To analyse the relationship between school organizational climate and student adjustment at the secondary school level.
2. To examine whether parents' educational background significantly influences student adjustment.

3. To determine whether student adjustment differs according to place of residence.
4. To assess the combined predictive influence of school organizational climate, parents' educational background, and place of residence on student adjustment.

### Research Questions

**RQ1:** What is the relationship between school organizational climate and student adjustment?

**RQ2:** Is parents' educational background significantly associated with student adjustment?

**RQ3:** Does student adjustment differ across urban, semi-urban, and rural residence?

**RQ4:** How strongly do school organizational climate, parents' educational background, and residence jointly predict student adjustment?

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

### 2.1 Student Adjustment at the Secondary School Level

Adjustment is multidimensional. Academic adjustment involves persistence, perceived competence and coping with workload; social adjustment concerns peer and teacher relationships; emotional adjustment concerns regulation of stress and affect; and institutional adjustment reflects belonging, participation and acceptance of school routines. These dimensions are interdependent: longitudinal evidence shows that expectations and mental-health difficulties around secondary-school transition can predict later school liking, loneliness and attainment (Rice et al., 2021). Support, resilience and positive affect similarly explain meaningful variation in adolescent school adjustment (Azpiazu et al., 2024). School well-being can therefore be understood as an outcome of both personal resources and the relational-organizational conditions in which learning occurs (Hoferichter, Hirvonen, & Kiuru, 2021).

### 2.2 School Organizational Climate and Student Adjustment

A positive school climate can supply predictable rules, psychological safety and relational resources that make academic and social demands easier to manage. Teacher support is associated with a more positive classroom social environment and less loneliness (Morin, 2020), while teacher-student closeness predicts stronger engagement trajectories and relationship quality is reciprocally connected with students' emotions (Engels et al., 2021; Goetz et al., 2021). Teacher and classmate support also relate to students' coping and achievement (Hoferichter, Kulakow, & Raufelder, 2022).

Belonging and connectedness appear especially important. School belonging is linked with perceptions of kindness (Lee & Huang, 2021), and school-based interventions can strengthen belonging when they build student strengths and

positive interactions (Allen et al., 2022). Connectedness has been associated with better mental-health outcomes during disrupted schooling (Hertz et al., 2022; Widnall et al., 2022), and perceived school climate may operate partly through belonging and depressive symptoms (Zhai et al., 2020). Climate dimensions such as fairness, safety and relationships also predict bullying and victimization trajectories during school transition (Marchante et al., 2022). Together with Indian evidence (Podiya et al., 2025), this supports H1: school organizational climate will have a significant positive effect on student adjustment.

### 2.3 Parents' Educational Background and Student Adjustment

Parents' educational background can influence adjustment through knowledge of school processes, expectations, access to learning resources and the quality of academic guidance. Family socioeconomic position and schoolwork support are related to school satisfaction (Horanicova et al., 2022), and parental involvement has an overall positive association with achievement across studies (Erdem & Kaya, 2020). In India, low parental involvement has been associated with later school dropout (Paul et al., 2021). Evidence from adolescents further suggests that academic socialization can be more useful than direct homework assistance at later developmental stages (Wei et al., 2022), while educational involvement is positively related to engagement through motivational and relational pathways (Chen et al., 2024; Song et al., 2024; Xiang et al., 2025). Parental education is also one component of broader socioeconomic conditions associated with child psychological adjustment (Abdul Karim et al., 2022). Accordingly, H2 predicts a significant positive association between parental educational background and student adjustment.

### 2.4 Place of Residence and Student Adjustment

Residence may shape the opportunity structure surrounding schooling. Rural and semi-urban students can encounter different transport, digital-access, staffing and extracurricular conditions from urban students, while urban students may face crowding, competition or other stressors. Empirical comparisons show residence-related differences in adolescent anxiety and health-related quality of life, but patterns vary with social context (Anjum et al., 2022; Jiménez Boraita et al., 2022). Hillekens et al. (2023) further showed that inequalities in school adjustment can widen when access to high-quality instruction and teacher relationships is disrupted. Residence is therefore treated as a contextual marker rather than a causal explanation. H3 predicts significant mean differences in adjustment across urban, semi-urban and rural groups.

## 2.5 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The conceptual model proposes that students interpret school climate directly through daily interactions, while parental education and residence represent background resources and constraints. Because these influences can overlap, their independent contribution is best evaluated jointly. H4 therefore predicts that school organizational climate, parental educational background and residence will jointly explain significant variance in student adjustment.

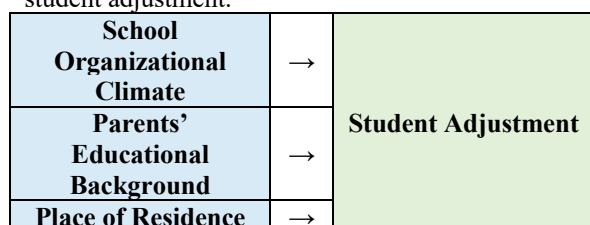


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the determinants of student adjustment

**H1:** School organizational climate has a significant positive effect on student adjustment.

**H2:** Parents' educational background has a significant positive association with student adjustment.

**H3:** Student adjustment differs significantly according to place of residence.

**H4:** School organizational climate, parents' educational background and place of residence jointly significantly predict student adjustment.

Corresponding null hypotheses: H01: School organizational climate has no significant positive relationship with student adjustment. H02: Parents' educational background has no significant association with student adjustment. H03: Student adjustment does not differ significantly by place of residence. H04: The three focal predictors do not jointly predict student adjustment significantly.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design and Illustrative Sample

The study is a methodological demonstration of a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. A synthetic dataset of  $N = 280$  students aged 13-17 years was generated to represent a plausible secondary-school sample. The composition was stratified illustratively across school type and residence; it must not be interpreted as a record of field sampling. No real schools, respondents, questionnaires or ethical approvals were represented. In a real study, a stratified random sample could be drawn from secondary schools after obtaining institutional permission.

### 3.2 Measures and Variable Coding

School Organizational Climate was operationalized as the mean of eight 5-point items covering teacher support, peer respect, safety, rule fairness, communication, participation, belonging and learning environment. Student Adjustment was the mean of ten 5-point items spanning academic, social, emotional and school-related adjustment.

Higher scores indicated more favourable perceptions. Parents' educational background represented the highest educational attainment of a parent/guardian and was coded 1 = no formal/primary, 2 = secondary, 3 = higher secondary, 4 = graduate, and 5 = postgraduate or above. Residence was coded urban, semi-urban or rural and entered in regression using urban as the reference category. Gender, age, grade, school type, family type, family socioeconomic level and parent occupation were retained descriptively.

## 3.3 Statistical Analysis and Ethical Considerations

Analyses used procedures equivalent to SPSS, R, Jamovi or Python. Frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations and observed ranges described the data. Internal consistency was evaluated with Cronbach's alpha. Pearson correlations examined continuous/ordinal associations. An auxiliary independent-samples t-test assessed gender differences. One-way ANOVA tested residence differences, followed by Tukey HSD and eta-squared. Multiple linear regression predicted adjustment from climate, parental education and residence dummies;  $R$ ,  $R^2$ , adjusted  $R^2$ ,  $F$ , unstandardized  $B$ , standardized beta,  $t$ ,  $p$  and 95% confidence intervals were reported. Statistical significance was set at  $p < .05$ . In actual empirical implementation, parental/guardian consent where required, student assent, voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality and institutional ethics approval would be mandatory.

## 4. Data Analysis and Results

### 4.1 Demographic Profile

The synthetic sample was 52.1% female and 47.9% male. Urban students formed 40.0% of the sample, semi-urban students 30.7% and rural students 29.3%. Government-school students represented 56.4%. The demographic allocation is shown in Table 1 and residence counts in Figure 2. As an auxiliary check, adjustment did not differ by gender,  $t(278) = -0.39$ ,  $p = .695$ , indicating no basis for adding gender to the primary explanatory model.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Synthetic Sample ( $N = 280$ )

| Variable / Category       | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender: Female            | 146       | 52.1       |
| Male                      | 134       | 47.9       |
| Age group: 13-14 years    | 106       | 37.9       |
| 15 years                  | 86        | 30.7       |
| 16-17 years               | 88        | 31.4       |
| Class/grade: Grade 8      | 82        | 29.3       |
| Grade 9                   | 101       | 36.1       |
| Grade 10                  | 97        | 34.6       |
| School type: Government   | 158       | 56.4       |
| Private/Aided             | 122       | 43.6       |
| Place of residence: Urban | 112       | 40.0       |
| Semi-urban                | 86        | 30.7       |

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| Variable / Category                      | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Rural                                    | 82        | 29.3       |
| Parents' education: No formal/Primary    | 24        | 8.6        |
| Secondary                                | 61        | 21.8       |
| Higher secondary                         | 70        | 25.0       |
| Graduate                                 | 82        | 29.3       |
| Postgraduate or above                    | 43        | 15.4       |
| Family type: Nuclear                     | 187       | 66.8       |
| Joint/Extended                           | 93        | 33.2       |
| Family socioeconomic level: Low          | 67        | 23.9       |
| Middle                                   | 151       | 53.9       |
| High                                     | 62        | 22.1       |
| Parent occupation: Salaried/Professional | 99        | 35.4       |
| Skilled/Manual                           | 80        | 28.6       |
| Self-employed/Business                   | 61        | 21.8       |
| Homemaker/Unemployed/Other               | 40        | 14.3       |

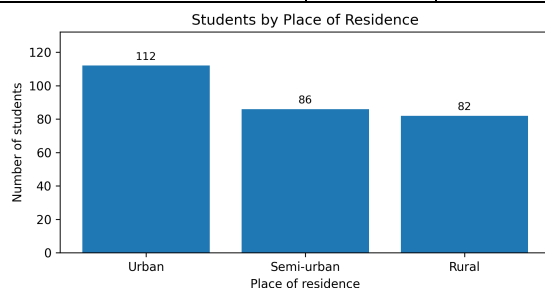


Figure 2. Distribution of students by place of residence in the synthetic dataset

## 4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Mean school organizational climate was 3.51 (SD = 0.53) and mean student adjustment was 3.23 (SD = 0.55), suggesting moderately favourable perceptions rather than ceiling-level responses. Parental education averaged 3.21 (SD = 1.20) on its 1-5 ordinal scale.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Major Study Variables

| Variable                              | N   | Mean | SD   | Minimum | Maximum |
|---------------------------------------|-----|------|------|---------|---------|
| School Organizational Climate         | 280 | 3.51 | 0.53 | 2.12    | 5.00    |
| Parents' Educational Background (1-5) | 280 | 3.21 | 1.20 | 1.00    | 5.00    |
| Student Adjustment                    | 280 | 3.23 | 0.55 | 1.60    | 4.70    |

Note. Parental education coding: 1 = no formal/primary to 5 = postgraduate or above.

## 4.3 Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency was good for both multi-item constructs: alpha = .84 for the eight-item climate scale and alpha = .89 for the ten-item adjustment scale. These coefficients indicate sufficient coherence for composite-score analysis without implying item redundancy.

Table 3. Reliability Analysis

| Construct                     | Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| School Organizational Climate | 8               | 0.841            |
| Student Adjustment            | 10              | 0.888            |

## 4.4 Correlation Analysis

School climate correlated positively with adjustment,  $r = .553$ ,  $p < .001$ , representing a moderate-to-strong association. Parental education also correlated positively with adjustment,  $r = .220$ ,  $p < .001$ , while climate and parental education were weakly related,  $r = .174$ ,  $p = .003$ . The pattern supports distinct but overlapping contextual contributions.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Matrix

| Variable                           | 1        | 2        | 3        |
|------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. School Organizational Climate   | 1        | 0.174**  | 0.553*** |
| 2. Parents' Educational Background | 0.174**  | 1        | 0.220*** |
| 3. Student Adjustment              | 0.553*** | 0.220*** | 1        |

Note. \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

## 4.5 Place of Residence and Student Adjustment

Adjustment differed significantly by residence,  $F(2, 277) = 6.04$ ,  $p = .003$ , eta-squared = .042. Urban students had the highest mean ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ), followed by semi-urban ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ) and rural students ( $M = 3.07$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ). Tukey HSD showed a significant urban-rural difference (mean difference = 0.27,  $p = .002$ ); rural-semi-urban and semi-urban-urban contrasts were not significant. Figure 3 visualizes the group means.

Table 5. Student Adjustment by Place of Residence

| Residence  | N   | Mean | SD   |
|------------|-----|------|------|
| Urban      | 112 | 3.34 | 0.56 |
| Semi-urban | 86  | 3.22 | 0.54 |
| Rural      | 82  | 3.07 | 0.51 |

ANOVA:  $F(2, 277) = 6.04$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.042$ . Tukey HSD: Urban > Rural,  $p = .002$ ; other pairwise differences  $p > .05$ .

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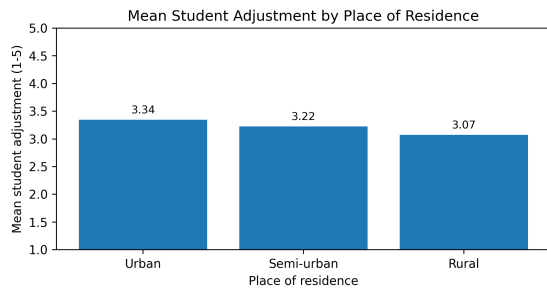


Figure 3. Mean student adjustment scores by place of residence

## 4.6 Multiple Regression Analysis

The regression model was significant,  $F(4, 275) = 38.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R = 0.597$ ,  $R^2 = 0.357$  and adjusted  $R^2 = 0.347$ . School climate was the strongest predictor ( $B = 0.544$ ,  $\beta = 0.520$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Parental education made a smaller positive contribution ( $B = 0.065$ ,  $\beta = 0.141$ ,  $p = .005$ ). Relative to urban residence, semi-urban residence predicted a 0.132-point lower adjustment score ( $p = .039$ ) and rural residence a 0.247-point lower score ( $p < .001$ ), holding the other predictors constant. Thus all four substantive hypotheses were supported at the overall-relationship level.

Table 6. Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Student Adjustment

| Predictor                       | B      | SE    | $\beta$ | t     | p      | 95% CI           |
|---------------------------------|--------|-------|---------|-------|--------|------------------|
| Constant                        | 1.220  | 0.188 | —       | 6.50  | < .001 | [0.851, 1.590]   |
| School Organizational Climate   | 0.544  | 0.051 | 0.520   | 10.57 | < .001 | [0.443, 0.645]   |
| Parents' Educational Background | 0.065  | 0.023 | 0.141   | 2.85  | 0.005  | [0.020, 0.109]   |
| Semi-urban (vs Urban)           | -0.132 | 0.064 | -0.111  | -2.07 | 0.039  | [-0.258, -0.006] |
| Rural (vs Urban)                | -0.247 | 0.065 | -0.205  | -3.82 | < .001 | [-0.374, -0.120] |

**Model fit:**  $R = 0.597$ ;  $R^2 = 0.357$ ; adjusted  $R^2 = 0.347$ ;  $F(4, 275) = 38.12$ ,  $p < .001$ . Urban residence is the reference category.

## 4.7 Hypothesis Testing

Table 7. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

| Hypotheses | Relationship Tested | Statistical Evidence | Decision |
|------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------|
|------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------|

|    |                                 |                                            |           |
|----|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------|
| H1 | Climate → Adjustment            | $r = 0.553$ ; $\beta = 0.520$ ; $p < .001$ | Supported |
| H2 | Parental education → Adjustment | $r = 0.220$ ; $\beta = 0.141$ ; $p = .005$ | Supported |
| H3 | Residence differences           | $F = 6.04$ ; $p = .003$ ; $\eta^2 = 0.042$ | Supported |
| H4 | Joint prediction                | $R^2 = 0.357$ ; $F = 38.12$ ; $p < .001$   | Supported |

## 5. Results and Discussion

The synthetic results are consistent with a contextual view of secondary-school adjustment. The largest coefficient belonged to school organizational climate, suggesting that the day-to-day school environment would be the most actionable of the three focal determinants in a comparable real dataset. This pattern accords with longitudinal work connecting positive climate to adolescent social-emotional health (Wong et al., 2021; Leurent et al., 2021), with intervention evidence showing that school climate can mediate adolescent mental-health benefits (Singla et al., 2021), and with Indian evidence emphasizing relationships, safety, belonging and participation (Podiya et al., 2025). The result is also compatible with studies of teacher support, classroom relationships and connectedness (Morin, 2020; Engels et al., 2021; Raniti et al., 2022).

Parental education had a statistically significant but much smaller association. This distinction matters: educational attainment may indicate access to knowledge, expectations and resources, yet it does not directly measure the quality of parenting or educational involvement. Research shows that the form of involvement changes its usefulness across development (Wei et al., 2022) and that relational quality and motivational mechanisms can shape engagement (Song et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2024). The present effect should therefore be interpreted as a background association rather than evidence that highly educated parents inherently produce better-adjusted students.

Residence explained additional differences, particularly between rural and urban students. The ANOVA effect size was modest, and semi-urban students occupied an intermediate position. This is compatible with evidence that residence-related differences can reflect unequal exposure to resources and stressors (Anjum et al., 2022; Jiménez Boraita et al., 2022). Importantly, cross-sectional residence contrasts cannot identify which mechanisms are responsible. The regression also

demonstrates that residence differences persisted after accounting for climate and parental education, but this is prediction, not causation. Unmeasured school quality, transport, family income, digital access or community factors could account for part of the residual pattern.

#### **6. Practical and Educational Implications**

School leaders should treat climate as a modifiable organizational resource: strengthen teacher support, fair discipline, safety, student voice, peer inclusion and school-belonging routines. Counsellors and teachers can identify students reporting weak connectedness before adjustment problems consolidate. Parent engagement should emphasize understandable guidance and constructive academic socialization rather than assume that educational credentials equal support. Policymakers should target resource and access gaps affecting rural and semi-urban students while avoiding deficit labels. Multi-tiered support can combine universal climate improvement with focused academic, counselling and digital-access assistance for students facing contextual disadvantage.

#### **7. Conclusion**

This study used a transparent synthetic dataset to demonstrate an empirical model of student adjustment at the secondary-school level. School organizational climate showed the strongest positive relationship with adjustment; parental education contributed a smaller positive association; and residence was associated with modest group differences, with rural students scoring lower than urban students in the illustrative data. Together, the predictors explained 35.7% of adjustment variance. The analysis therefore supports studying school, family and geographic contexts simultaneously, while emphasizing school climate as the most directly modifiable domain. The principal limitations are the synthetic data, cross-sectional design, self-report-style measures, simplified parental-education coding and omitted socioeconomic mechanisms; no inference should be made about actual students or populations. Future research should collect ethically approved multi-school data, use validated scales and multilevel/longitudinal designs, and test whether school climate buffers socioeconomic and geographic disparities over time.

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