

Adjustment and Ethics in Education: A Comparative Study of Vocational and Academic Students

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ABSTRACT

The current study compares the ethical ideals and adaptability levels of students in academic and vocational programs. For today's youth, adjustment—a crucial sign of mental health and personality development—and ethical values—which direct moral thinking and social behavior—are crucial developmental domains. Stratified random sampling was used to choose 240 students from different educational institutions in Punjab, 120 of whom were academic and 120 of whom were vocational. The students were split evenly between males and females. The Ethical Values Scale by Dr. Asha Bhargava and Dr. Shaleen, as well as the Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS) by A.K.P. Sinha and R.P. Singh, were used. Academic students showed better adjustment in emotional and educational dimensions, while vocational students showed stronger ethical orientation in areas of honesty and responsibility. These findings showed significant differences in adjustment and ethical values between academic and vocational students. Notable gender inequalities were also noted by the study. The findings provide guidance for educators and legislators in creating more comprehensive curricula.

Keywords: Adjustment, Ethical Values, Vocational Education, Academic Stream, Adolescents

Introduction

Education is a transforming force that molds pupils' conduct, ethics, and adaptability in addition to imparting knowledge. Students' social and personal growth within these frameworks is becoming an increasingly important topic as the academic and vocational fields of study become more diverse. Academic education has historically focused on intellectual growth, whereas vocational education stresses employability-enhancing practical skills. Understanding how these educational pathways affect two crucial facets of student development—adjustment and ethical values—is the goal of the current study.

The process by which people find balance with both their surroundings and themselves is referred to as adjustment. It shows emotional stability, mental health, and the capacity to manage pressures from family, friends, and the classroom. Conversely, internalized moral norms that impact behavior and decision-

making are known as ethical values. These principles are essential for developing responsible professionals and citizens.

It is crucial to look into how students' adjustment skills and ethical orientations change between academic and vocational streams due to their different objectives and teaching techniques. This knowledge can help institutions promote education that is both skill- and value-based.

Review of Related Literature

Better emotional adjustment in students leads to more responsible behavior and greater moral standards, according to Bhatt (1983). Mehta (1991) examined academic and vocational students and found that while academic students reported greater psychological adjustment, vocational students excelled in work ethics. According to Kaur (2009), there is a direct link between educational paths and the growth of moral principles in teenagers, with classroom settings encouraging more empathy and justice. According to Sharma and Sharma (2012), who emphasized the impact of peer relationships on the development of values in educational environments, vocational groups occasionally lack the regulated moral discourse seen in academic programs.

Coopersmith (1967) linked adjustment with self-esteem, finding that students who have a high sense of their own value are more likely to be adaptable. According to more recent research, children from all educational backgrounds develop better value systems when ethics instruction is incorporated into the curriculum.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the adjustment levels among vocational and academic students.
2. To evaluate the ethical values of vocational and academic students.
3. To compare the adjustment dimensions (emotional, social, and educational) across both streams.
4. To explore gender-wise differences in adjustment and ethical values.
5. To investigate the interrelationship between adjustment and ethical values in both groups.

Hypotheses

1. There is a significant difference in adjustment levels between vocational and academic students.
2. There is a significant difference in ethical values between vocational and academic students.
3. Gender significantly influences adjustment and ethical values.
4. Adjustment and ethical values are significantly correlated.

Methodology

Method Used: Descriptive survey method

Sample: 240 students (120 vocational and 120 academics; 60 boys and 60 girls in each group) from schools in Rajasthan selected through stratified random sampling.

Tools Used:

- *Adjustment Inventory for School Students* by A.K.P. Sinha & R.P. Singh (1993)
- *Ethical Values Scale* by Dr. Asha Bhargava & Dr. Shaleen (2015)

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Mean, SD and t-values on Adjustment Scores of Vocational and Academic Students

Group	Mean	SD	t-value
Vocational	64.2	7.5	2.74**
Academic	68.5	6.3	

There is a notable disparity between the adjustment levels of academic and vocational students, as indicated by the data in Table 1. Academic students' mean adjustment score is 68.5, significantly higher than vocational students' mean score of 64.2. Moderate variation in adjustment scores within both groups is indicated by the standard deviation values, which are 6.3 for academic students and 7.5 for vocational students. The difference between the two groups is not the result of chance, as indicated by the calculated t-value of 2.74, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This implies that compared to their vocational colleagues, academic students generally show greater overall adaptability.

The higher adjustment levels of academic students may be linked to structured academic surroundings, greater exposure to competitive settings, and more opportunity for personal and social growth within their educational framework.

Table 2: Mean, SD and t-values on Ethical Values of Vocational and Academic Students

Group	Mean	SD	t-value
Vocational	75.6	6.8	2.31*
Academic	72.1	7.4	

A comparison of academic and vocational students' ethical principles is shown in Table 2. On the Ethical Values Scale, the vocational group reported a higher mean score of 75.6 than the academic group, which reported a mean score of 72.1. Indicating a similar range of responses within each category, the standard deviation for academic students is slightly greater at 7.4, whereas it is 6.8 for vocational students. The two groups' ethical orientations differed significantly, as indicated by the computed t-value of 2.31, which is significant at the 0.05 level. These results imply that compared to their academic peers, vocational students have a greater propensity toward ethical principles. The practical and experience-based character of vocational training, which frequently stresses real-world responsibilities, teamwork, and moral decision-making in professional contexts, may be the cause of this.

Table 3: Gender-wise Differences in Adjustment and Ethical Values

Variable	Gender	Mean	SD	t-value
Adjustment	Boys	65.0	7.1	2.19*
	Girls	67.4	6.6	
Ethical Values	Boys	73.0	7.0	2.45*
	Girls	75.8	6.5	

Students' adaptability and ethical ideals vary by gender, as seen in Table 3. The mean score for adjustment is greater for girls (67.4) than for boys (65.0). The standard deviations for boys and girls are 7.1 and 6.6, respectively, suggesting that girls' adjustment scores are a little more consistent. Girls appear to be better adjusted than boys, as indicated by the statistically significant t-value of 2.19 at the 0.05 level. Girls perform better than boys in ethical principles as well, with a mean score of 75.8 compared to 73.0. For girls and boys, the standard deviation is 6.5 and 7.0, respectively. The gender difference in ethical values is significant, as indicated by the t-value of 2.45, which is likewise significant at the 0.05 level. These findings suggest that females have higher ethical orientations and are more emotionally and socially adaptive. This may be due to gender-based socialization patterns that place more emphasis on female students' moral sensitivity, empathy, and collaboration.

Table 4: Correlation between Adjustment and Ethical Values

Group	r-value	Significance
Vocational	0.41	$p < 0.01$
Academic	0.36	$p < 0.01$

The relationship between adjustment and ethical principles among academic and vocational students is seen in Table 4. At the 0.01 level, the correlation coefficient (r) for vocational students is 0.41, indicating statistical significance. This suggests that stronger ethical beliefs in this group are linked to higher levels of adjustment, as evidenced by the somewhat positive association between the two measures. At the 0.01 level, academic students also exhibit a significant positive correlation of 0.36, suggesting that students' ethical views tend to develop more as they become more well-adjusted. These results demonstrate the strong correlation between ethical ideals and adaptability in both school streams. The positive associations illustrate the connection of teenagers' moral growth and psychological stability, supporting the notion that emotionally and socially well-adjusted students are more likely to internalize and uphold ethical ideals.

Implications of the Study

For educators, curriculum designers, legislators, and other stakeholders engaged in the comprehensive development of kids in both academic and vocational streams, the study's conclusions have important ramifications. Value education, life skills training, and the development of emotional intelligence must be incorporated into mainstream curricula immediately, as evidenced by the observed variations in adjustment and ethical values between the two educational groups and between genders. These elements are crucial for developing well-rounded people who can succeed in a variety of social and professional contexts, in addition to improving students' academic and professional potential.

First and foremost, value education needs to become a fundamental part of academic and vocational curricula. Through specialized educational modules, interactive conversations, real-life case studies, and community engagement activities, ethical qualities like honesty, empathy, respect, accountability, and social

justice should be actively fostered. Students will benefit from this by internalizing moral principles that can direct their choices in both their personal and professional lives.

Training in emotional intelligence, which encompasses self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal skills, can greatly improve students' capacity to adapt to shifting circumstances and effectively handle stress. In the vocational stream, where students frequently enter the workforce right away and must swiftly adjust to real-world obstacles, these abilities are especially important.

Additionally, treatments tailored to a particular stream should be created to meet the special developmental requirements of academic and vocational pupils. For example, academic students may need assistance in applying theoretical knowledge to practical and social contexts, while vocational students may benefit from exposure to ethical challenges in workplace settings.

Additionally, gender-sensitive methods are essential. Teachers must work to establish inclusive learning settings that promote the emotional and ethical growth of all kids, as the study found significant gender disparities in both adjustment and ethical principles, with girls generally performing better. Male empowerment should receive particular attention through exercises that foster empathy and moral reasoning, teamwork, and confidence-building.

In order to give students ongoing direction and assistance, schools and universities should also establish peer mentorship and career counseling programs. These programs can improve adjustment and value development by assisting students in navigating ethical dilemmas, interpersonal difficulties, and academic expectations.

Finally, the goal of educational changes informed by the findings of this study should be to create citizens who are not just competent professionals but also responsible, moral, and emotionally stable. Institutions need to understand that merely training students for the workforce is insufficient; they also need to focus on developing their sense of civic responsibility, moral clarity, and emotional resilience.

The future workforce and society as a whole can be significantly shaped by schools and colleges by creating a more thorough, values-based learning environment.

Conclusion

The study comes to the conclusion that vocational students exhibit stronger ethical beliefs, even while academic students exhibit better adaptability. The importance of holistic education is highlighted by the important interaction between personality development and educational surroundings. Differences by gender also become apparent, with girls exhibiting higher levels of flexibility and ethical orientation. The necessity for balanced development programs that foster both moral integrity and psychosocial well-being is indicated by the positive association found between adjustment and ethical values. To gain a deeper understanding of students' lived experiences, future research should take into account qualitative aspects and longitudinal investigations.

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Cite this Article

Dr. Lakhvinder Singh, “*Adjustment and Ethics in Education: A Comparative Study of Vocational and Academic students*”, *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Arts, Science and Technology (IJMRASST)*, ISSN: 2584-0231, Volume 3, Issue 1, pp. 09-14, January 2025.

Journal URL: <https://ijmrast.com/>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61778/ijmrast.v3i1.104>



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