



A Gender-Based Comparative Analysis of Learning Adjustment in Elective Subjects: A Cross-Sectional Study in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Learning adjustment among students is a crucial aspect in fostering strong academic achievement, particularly in elective courses. With effective learning adjustment, students become better able to set clear academic goals, focus on learning activities, and successfully meet all academic demands. Various factors influence students' learning adjustment, one of which is gender. This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of learning adjustment in elective subjects between male and female students. **Methods:** This study employed a quantitative approach using a comparative method. Sampling was conducted using total sampling, with a sample size of 194 Phase F students at SMA N 2 Pulau Punjung, comprising 117 female students (59.3%) and 77 male students (39.7%). The instrument used in this study was a student learning adjustment scale that had been developed and validated through expert judgment. Additionally, the instrument had undergone validity and reliability testing. The validity test results showed that all item-total correlation coefficients exceeded the r-table values. The reliability test yielded a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.970. Data analysis was performed using the independent samples t-test. **Findings:** The results of the study indicate that, descriptively and overall, students' learning adjustment at SMAN 2 Pulau Punjung falls into the high category. Next, based on hypothesis testing, it was found that women had higher scores than men, $t(192) = -2.344$, $p = 0.020$, mean difference = 7.01, 95% CI [1.11, 12.90], with an effect size based on the article's statistical calculations of approximately Cohen's $d = 0.34$, or small to moderate. **Research Implications:** This study provides empirical evidence that gender still influences students' academic adjustment in specific subject area **Originality:** This study offers an analysis of self-adjustment in learning, particularly in specialized subjects, which, in this context, are still very limited and have not yet been addressed.



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INTRODUCTION

Achieving outstanding academic performance is one of the primary goals students must achieve in school. Achieving good academic performance is not easy; students must do many things, one of which is developing effective academic adjustment strategies (Aspelmeier et al., 2012; Raza et al., 2021; Rooij et al., 2018). Academic adjustment is a student's ability to meet academic demands through motivation, academic effort, academic engagement, and satisfaction with the learning environment (Credé & Niehorster, 2012). This variable relates to high levels of motivation to learn (Anderson et al., 2016), clear academic goals, focus on academic work, efforts to cope with academic demands, and satisfaction with the academic environment (Baker & Stryk, 1984).

The current state of students' learning adjustment needs to be taken seriously, as a great deal of data indicates that students' learning adjustment is suboptimal. For example, a study conducted by Viet (2021) in Vietnam showed that regarding students' learning adjustment, 55 students (6.9%) had a low level of learning adjustment; 700 students (87.4%) had a moderate level of adjustment; and only 46 students (5.7%) had a high level of adjustment. Furthermore, a study conducted by Rahmadani & Mukti (2020) in Jakarta also yielded similar results. Overall, the entire study

sample exhibited learning adjustment levels ranging from low to moderate. Specifically, 35.3% of the sample had low learning adjustment, 50.6% fell into the moderate category, and only 14.1% were in the high category.

Based on this data, it can be observed that students' learning adjustment remains an issue that requires serious examination. This is because low learning adjustment among students can affect various aspects of their lives. For example, in the academic realm, it can impact their motivation to learn. A study conducted by [Ahmad & Rana \(2023\)](#) examined the relationship between students' learning adjustment and their motivation to learn. The results indicate that when individuals have low learning adjustment, their motivation to learn decreases. Furthermore, the study states that learning adjustment plays a crucial role in motivating students to learn. Additionally, another aspect affected by low learning adjustment is academic achievement. A study by [Rooij et al. \(2018\)](#) found that there is a relationship between learning adjustment and academic achievement. If students' learning adjustment is low, it will lead to a decline in academic performance, resulting in lower academic achievement. In addition, other aspects that may also be affected include learning satisfaction and self-efficacy ([Banikhaled, 2009](#); [Rooij et al., 2018](#)). In addition to the academic impact, the psychological impact must also be taken into account. In this regard, poor academic adjustment can also affect certain psychological aspects. A study conducted by Yu et al. (2023) has empirically demonstrated this. The study's findings indicate that the poorer a student's academic adjustment, the greater the likelihood of experiencing depression. Another consequence is the onset of anxiety ([Guo & Qiu, 2024](#)).

The study indicates that students' learning adjustment in elective courses needs to be examined in greater depth. Given this diversity of subjects, students need to choose those that may be relevant to them. The study indicates that students' ability to adapt to specialized subjects needs to be examined more thoroughly. Given the wide variety of subjects, students certainly need to have strong adaptability skills. The various elective courses offered to students in the current education system include Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Computer Science, Advanced Mathematics, Sociology, Economics, Geography, Anthropology, Advanced Indonesian, Advanced English, Korean, Arabic, Mandarin, Japanese, German, French, and Crafts and Entrepreneurship ([Aini & Sylvia, 2025](#)). Therefore, according to [Cahyono & Padmi \(2023\)](#), students must be able to adjust and adapt to these subjects. Based on these points, it becomes clear how important it is to adapt one's learning to specialized subjects.

There are several internal and external factors that can influence students' learning adjustments ([Girelli et al., 2018](#); [Pezirkianidis et al., 2022](#)). One internal factor that can influence students' learning adjustment is gender ([Bacon-Kaufman, 2015](#); [Kaim & Romi, 2025](#)). In this context, men and women undergo different socialization experiences, leading to the development of distinct psychological, emotional, motivational, and behavioral characteristics. These differences can then influence how individuals cope with academic demands ([Lesch et al., 2023](#)). Studies on these differences have been conducted previously, but no consistent findings have yet emerged. Furthermore, based on the researchers' review, studies on self-regulation in learning, particularly in elective courses, remain very limited and, in some cases, have not yet been conducted. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap in the literature, thereby establishing a new paradigm for understanding students' learning regulation.

Based on this, this study was conducted to perform a comparative analysis of students' learning adjustments in elective courses by gender. This study will be useful in providing an evidence-based overview of gender differences in relation to students' academic adjustment in elective courses. It may also serve as a direction for future research on learning adjustments. To provide a clear direction for this study, the following research questions were formulated.

RQ1. What is the profile of students' learning adjustment in elective courses?

RQ2. Are there significant differences in students' learning adjustment in elective courses between male and female students?

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach using comparative analysis. It aims to provide an understanding of the similarities or differences between one thing and another by conducting comparative tests. ([Esser & Vliegenthart, 2017](#)). The population for this study consisted of students in Phase F at SMAN 2 Pulau Punjung; the sample comprised the entire population using total sampling, totaling 194 students. The instrument used in this study was a Likert-scale (1–5) measure of student academic adjustment, consisting of a total of 36 items that had been developed and weighted by three experts in the field of guidance and counseling. In addition, the instrument underwent validity and reliability testing. The results showed that all items met the validity criteria. The correlation coefficients for all items exceeded the r-table values. Similarly, in the reliability test, the Cronbach's alpha score obtained was 0.970, which is greater than 0.70; therefore, it can be concluded that the instrument developed is reliable. The comparative analysis was

conducted using parametric statistics with the independent-samples t-test formula. All hypothesis testing was performed using SPSS 26.00.

RESULTS

The presentation of these research findings will begin with an overview of the data collected regarding students' adjustment to learning in their elective courses. To provide an overall picture of students' learning adjustment, the following table is presented.

Table 1. Description of Student Learning Adjustments

Category	Interval	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
Very High	≥ 149	8	10.38%	25	21.36%
High	121-148	49	63.63%	72	61.53%
Moderate	93-120	10	12.98%	11	9.40%
Low	65-92	9	11.68%	8	6.83%
Very Low	≤ 64	1	1.29%	1	0.85%
Total		77	100%	117	100%

Based on this data, we can see the state of students' learning adjustment in their elective subjects. Among male students, the data shows that 8 students (10.38%) have a very high level of learning adjustment, while the "high" category is the most dominant, comprising 49 students (63.63%); in addition, 10 students (12.98%) demonstrate a moderate level of learning adjustment. As for the low category, there were 9 students (11.68%), and only 1 student (1.29%) fell into the very low category. The results for female students also showed a positive trend. A total of 25 students (21.36%) had very high levels of academic adjustment, and the majority of students, 72 students (61.53%), also fell into the high category. Additionally, 11 students (9.40%) had moderate levels of academic adjustment. Additionally, 8 students (6.83%) were in the low category, and, as before, only 1 student (0.85%) had very low learning adjustments. Therefore, these data indicate a positive trend in students' learning adjustments, with the majority falling into the high to very high categories. To provide a more detailed overview, the following graph is presented.

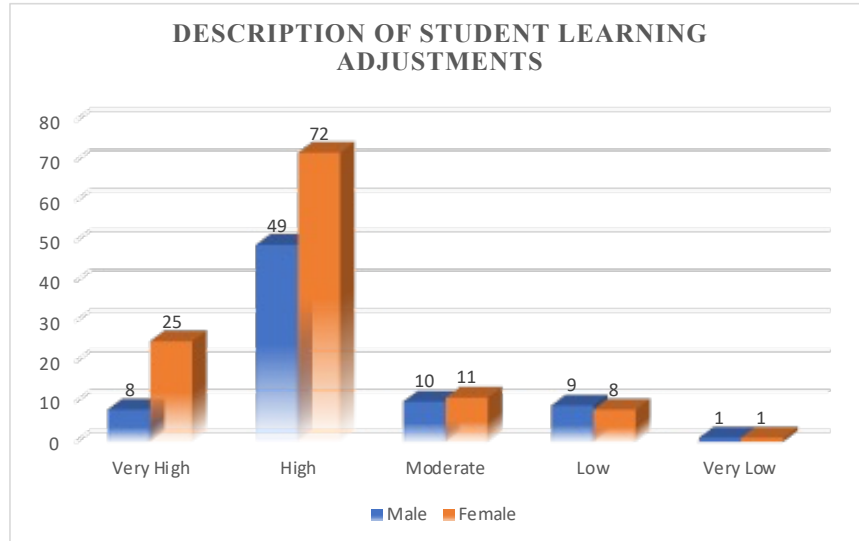


Figure 1. Description of Student Learning Adjustments

Next, before the researcher tests the research hypothesis, a test of the prerequisites for the analysis is conducted first. In this case, to use the independent-samples t-test formula, a normality test is required. The normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, with the following results.

Table 2. Normality Test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
		Unstandardized Residual
N		77
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	0,0000000
	Std. Deviation	14,10588764
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	0,071
	Positive	0,071
	Negative	-0,048
Test Statistic		0,071
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.200 ^{c,d}

Based on Table 1, the results of the normality test can be observed. Conclusions regarding this data are drawn by examining the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) column, where the obtained value is 0.200. In this case, since the score obtained is >0.05 , it can be concluded that the data used are normally distributed, so a parametric statistical test can be performed.

Next, after the data was determined to be normally distributed, a hypothesis test was conducted using the independent-samples t-test formula. The hypothesis test was performed to determine whether there is a significant difference in students' learning adjustment in elective subjects between male and female students. The test results are presented as follows.

Table 3. Independent Sample T-Test

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Learning Adjustment	Equal variances assumed	0,218	0,641	-2,344	192	0,020	-7,006	2,989	-12,903	-1,110
	Equal variances not assumed			-2,315	155,831	0,022	-7,006	3,027	-12,985	-1,027

Based on the table above, before drawing conclusions regarding the research hypothesis, it is necessary to first examine the homogeneity of the data being tested, as this is one of the requirements for the independent samples t-test. As can be seen in the Sig. column, the score is 0.641. Since this score is greater than 0.05, the data is deemed homogeneous based on the test criteria. Next, to address the research hypothesis, examine the Sig. (2-tailed) column. The score obtained is 0.020. Since this is less than the test criterion of 0.05, it can be concluded that the hypothesis is accepted: there is a significant difference in students' learning adjustment in elective subjects between male and female students. Furthermore, based on this analysis, the magnitude of the effect of this difference was found to be Cohen's $d = 0.34$, leading to the conclusion that the effect falls into the small category.

Table 4. Comparison of Mean Scores

Group Statistics					
Variable		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Learning Adjustment	Male	77	127,18	21,105	2,405
	Female	117	134,19	19,876	1,838

Furthermore, to gain a deeper understanding of these differences, one can refer to the comparison table. Based on this table, the mean scores for male and female students differ significantly. The table indicates that female students demonstrate better academic adjustment in elective courses compared to male students. This difference in mean scores of 7.01 serves as evidence that female students have a greater ability to adapt to academic tasks and to adjust to a supportive learning environment, thereby enabling them to maximize their learning process.

Next, to reinforce the previous data, we will present the differences in students' learning adjustment scores based on specific aspects. This presentation will highlight the differences in each aspect of students' learning adjustment between male and female students.

Table 5. Differences in Learning Adjustments by Aspect

Aspect	Gender	Frequency	Mean	Standar Deviation
Absence of Excessive Emotion	Male	77	16.05	3.56
	Female	117	16.37	3.42
Absence of Defense Mechanism	Male	77	19.45	3.75
	Female	117	20.22	3.41
Absence of Personal Frustration	Male	77	21.47	4.59
	Female	117	22.90	4.34
Rational Deliberation & Self-Direction	Male	77	14.34	3.14
	Female	117	15.09	3.32
Ability to Learn	Male	77	21.27	4.26
	Female	117	22.44	4.37
Utilization of Past Experience	Male	77	20.31	4.29
	Female	117	21.89	4.29
Realistic & Objective	Male	77	14.29	3.03
	Female	117	15.28	2.66

Based on the previous table, it can be clearly observed that there are seven aspects measured in this study that relate to self-adjustment in learning. Overall, it is evident that, across all these aspects, female students achieved higher scores. In the aspect of absence of excessive emotion, male students achieved a mean score of 16.05, while female students achieved a score of 16.37. This indicates that female students are better able to individually control their emotions so that they do not manifest excessively when facing various life situations. Consequently, this ability minimizes disruptions in learning activities. Furthermore, the absence of defense mechanisms aspect also showed similar results, with male students scoring a mean of 19.45 and female students scoring 20.22. This illustrates that female students are better able to accept reality openly, acknowledge their own shortcomings, and seek realistic solutions to the problems they face, rather than constantly resorting to defense mechanisms.

Next, the aspect of absence of personal frustration also showed higher scores among female students, with a mean score of 22.90, while male students scored 21.47. This indicates that female students are better able to manage feelings of disappointment so that they do not develop into prolonged emotional distress. Consequently, they can maintain their motivation to learn even when receiving low grades or experiencing difficulties in certain subjects. The aspect of rational deliberation and self-direction also showed a similar pattern, with female students again dominating, with a mean score of 15.09, while male students scored 14.34. This aspect indicates that female students exhibit better rational judgment in decision-making and in directing their behavior toward predetermined goals. In the context of learning, they are better able to choose appropriate learning strategies, manage their study time independently, and consistently carry out their study plans.

Next, regarding the ability to learn aspect, based on the data, male students achieved a mean score of 21.27, while female students achieved a score of 22.44. The higher score among female students indicates that they are better able to consistently learn from their experiences, whether successful or unsuccessful. Next, regarding the utilization of experience aspect, male students scored a mean of 20.31, while female students scored higher at 21.89. These results indicate that female students are better able to leverage past experiences such as choosing courses, overcoming learning difficulties, or achieving success as factors in determining their future learning strategies. The final aspect is realistic and objective; in this regard, the scores for male students were still lower, with a mean of 14.29, while female students scored 15.28. This indicates that female students are better able to adopt a realistic and objective attitude, which in turn enables them to accurately assess their academic abilities, set learning goals aligned with their potential, and accept their learning outcomes as a basis for future improvement.

Based on the data presented and the brief discussion above, it can be accurately concluded that there are indeed differences between male and female students in every aspect of learning adjustment in elective courses. Across all aspects, female students demonstrated better quality of learning adjustment. This reinforces the results of previous hypothesis tests, which showed that, descriptively speaking, female students adapt better to learning in elective courses than male students.

DISCUSSION

The presentation of the results from the previous data analysis showed positive results. In this case, aside from the overall level of students' learning adjustment, the majority fell into the high and very high categories. This indicates that the majority of students possess a strong ability to adapt to learning demands, subject matter, teaching methods, and the learning environment. This is certainly something that needs to be maintained and further developed. This is because many positive outcomes will follow when students demonstrate strong learning adjustment, including improved academic achievement (Jahan, 2020; Raza et al., 2021; Rooij et al., 2018; Song & Hu, 2024). Research conducted by Holliman et al. (2019) indicates that there is a positive and significant relationship between students' learning adjustment and academic achievement. When students' learning adjustment is good, their academic achievement also improves. Furthermore, the study's findings indicate that good learning adjustment also increases students' satisfaction with their chosen subjects. In addition, another positive aspect that can result from learning adjustment is an increase in psychological well-being (Holliman et al., 2022; Muallifah et al., 2026; Olasupo et al., 2017) and mental health (Jeong & Nam, 2023).

Furthermore, for some students with low academic adjustment, it is crucial to improve this aspect. This is because suboptimal academic adjustment can lead to various unintended negative consequences. One such negative consequence that may occur when students have poor academic adjustment is depression. Research conducted by Yu et al. (2023) has empirically demonstrated this. The results of their study indicate that the poorer a student's academic adjustment, the greater the potential for experiencing depression. This finding is also supported by research conducted by Marcotte et al. (2018), whose findings suggest that academic adjustment predicts lower levels of depressive symptoms over the following two years. However, if academic adjustment is low, students will experience more severe depressive symptoms. Other negative impacts that may also arise include anxiety (Guo & Qiu, 2024), stress (Chui & Chan, 2020), and an increased risk of dropping out (Rooij et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the results of the hypothesis testing also support the researchers' assumptions. Specifically, there is a significant difference in self-adjustment in learning specialized subjects between male and female students. These results indicate that gender is not merely a biological aspect of human beings. Rather, it is also related to various psychological aspects, such as its influence on academic self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Huang, 2013; Y. Liu & Dipolog-Ubanan, 2025; Moraga-Pumarino et al., 2025; Nielsen et al., 2018; Vantieghem et al., 2014; Wahid et al., 2024), learning styles (Nuzhat et al., 2013; Philbin et al., 1995; Wehrwein et al., 2007), and self-regulated learning (X. Liu et al., 2021; Rohman et al., 2020). This indicates that gender significantly influences variations in psychological and emotional aspects among individuals (Hyde, 2014; Jäncke, 2018; Kheloui et al., 2023; Kret & De Gelder, 2012; Whittle et al., 2011). One of these factors influences students' ability to adjust to learning. The findings of this study indicate that males and females do indeed exhibit different attitudes, responses, and behaviors toward a given situation.

Of course, this study is supported by various previous research findings. A study conducted by Bacon-Kaufman (2015) found that gender significantly influences academic adjustment. Further results indicate that female students were found to have higher levels of academic and social adjustment than male students. Another recent study relevant to supporting the findings of this research is the study conducted by Bastomi et al. (2025) on 200 students from several state Islamic universities in Indonesia. The findings indicate that there is a significant difference in academic adjustment between men and women. The study further discusses that female students tend to demonstrate better academic adjustment abilities than male students and also exhibit a stronger sense of attachment to their educational institutions.

Based on this review, the findings of this study have been supported by various theories and empirical evidence. Therefore, the findings of this study provide a new perspective for guidance and counseling teachers in understanding aspects of students' learning adjustment, particularly in elective subjects. Consequently, in the future, guidance and counseling teachers whose scope of work includes the field of learning (Handayani et al., 2022; Nurfarhanah & Karina, 2023; Sinaga et al., 2026) can design and implement programs to optimize students' self-adjustment in learning. Although the results of this study indicate that there are significant differences in students' learning adjustment in elective subjects, these findings cannot yet be generalized. This is because the sample size is still relatively small; therefore, the researcher recommends that future researchers conduct more in-depth studies with larger samples and more diverse characteristics.

CONCLUSION

Students' learning adjustment is a crucial factor in fostering strong academic achievement, particularly in elective courses. Effective learning adjustment enables students to set clear academic goals, focus on learning activities, apply

their learning experiences, and successfully meet all academic demands. The research results indicate that, descriptively and overall, students' learning adjustment at SMAN 2 Pulau Punjung falls into the high category. Next, based on hypothesis testing, it was found that women had higher scores than men, $t(192) = -2.344$, $p = 0.020$, mean difference = 7.01, 95% CI [1.11, 12.90], with an effect size based on the article's statistical calculations of approximately Cohen's $d = 0.34$, or small to moderate. Additionally, across the seven measured aspects, female students demonstrated higher mean scores. Thus, in this context, female students are found to have better learning adjustment in specialized subjects than male students. This study provides empirical evidence that gender still influences students' academic adjustment in specific subject areas. However, the findings of this study cannot yet be generalized. This is because the study population was limited to a single school and the sample size was still relatively small; therefore, the researchers recommend that future studies conduct more in-depth, multi-site research with larger samples and more diverse characteristics. Furthermore, researchers should employ more comprehensive methods, such as longitudinal studies, and control for confounding variables to examine long-term effects.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

RN contributed to several aspects of this study, namely the formulation of the research concept, the development of research instruments, data collection, data analysis, and manuscript writing. N contributed to the formulation of the

research concept and methodology, the development of research instruments, manuscript writing, and data review. ZA contributed to the development of the research concept and methodology, the development of research instruments, the writing of the manuscript, and the proofreading of the article. DS contributed to the development of the research concept and methodology, the development of research instruments, and the writing of the manuscript.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The researchers used Grammarly to assess grammar, with the aim of promoting high-quality, academic writing. However, the results generated by this tool were reviewed again by all the authors.

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