



RESEARCH PAPER

**A Study of Social Skills Development among the Students of
Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab,
Pakistan**

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ABSTRACT

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The substantial purpose of this study was to identify the level of social skills development in prospective teachers of the Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of the Punjab. As it is stressed that the development of social skills in necessary in teachers as if teachers possess these characteristics, it will affect their students and will also improve the quality of teaching process. Descriptive survey research method was adopted to conduct this research. Five departments were randomly selected. 162 subjects were requested to participate in the study. T-test and ANOVA were run for the purpose of data analysis. The results of the study showed that there is no significant difference in the development of social skills in the students of various departments of IER. It was also evident from the results that there is no significant difference in the development of social skills on the basis of students' background studies.

Introduction

Social skills are set of socially acceptable learned behaviors (Patrick, 2008; Coronado, 2009; Garcia, 2009), helping individuals to avoid negative social interactions (Olaz, 2012) and further difficulties (Gresham & Elliott, 1990; Caballo, 2007). The research has proved effectiveness of social skills learned at different stages of life as one of the most essential

The social skills are different from social competencies in terms of discreetness, identification and specification as learned behavior resulting in positive results Warger and Rutherford (1993). Past research reveals that teachers affect students' personalities and if teachers possess good social skills, they will not only spend a successful social life rather they will transmit good social skills and values to their students Manrique, (2016). The teachers are most important part of learning process as they are modeled by the students, so it is important to teach them social skills (Voegler-Lee & Kupersmidt, 2010) The social skills training (SST) program is aimed to improve the well-being of children and adults (including teachers), and it also aimed at training them to lead a better social life (Elias et al; Gazda, 2005). Training procedure includes modeling, coaching, and social cognitive techniques

which have a strong effect on social skills (Schneider & Bryne, 1985). The present study aimed at identification of the extent education has developed these skills among prospective teachers. Upon completion of university education of professional teacher training, prospective teachers start their professional life, meaning they will be responsible for the development of social skills among their young students. Hence, it can be expected that teachers with better social skills would lead to the better social development of their students so that their students will be equipped with social skills and be well-adjusted in society (Barton-Arwood et al., 2005; Courtney, 2007).

Literature Review

Learning is a lifelong process and considered as a social activity (Dewey, 1938). The quick socio-social turns of events and consistently expanding instructive requirements gear toward new academic ways to deal with the instructive interaction. The teacher-centered assimilative learning of conventional education is progressively being deserted and it is being replaced by the student-centered dynamic/participative opportunity for growth (Voukelatou, 2019). Education is the source of formal learning and the main aim of education is to inculcate skills in individuals. These skills may be divided into two categories: personal skills and social skills. The former is related to an individual oneself, however, the latter is concerned with his/her behavior in society. According to King (1973), education is a social process and one of its purposes is to improve society. It is worth noting that social skills are not always inborn or inherited rather they are generally learned during the process of socialization. Moreover, like many other skills, social skills are developed through practice. Therefore, education can be a good source of social skill development. The process of social development begins in childhood and continues to adulthood. Orr (2003) found that social skills are one the important factor in academic failures, job failures, and difficulty in developing and maintaining relationships (Garcia, 2005). Karadeg and Cliskan (2009) also opined that "rejection can lead a number of undesired characteristics in particular aggressive behavior and withdrawal, in severe cases these characteristics can result in lower academic achievement, criminality, loneliness and depression." (p. 30).

Social skills may be defined as the behaviors that make communication possible with others (Yuksel1999). Communication has been defined differently by different people. Karadag and Caliskan (2009) defined communication as a tool used for the transmission of information and ideas and it affects an individual throughout his/her life. Communication is also defined as something common and shared (Gursimsek., Vural., & Demirsoz, 2008). As long as communication skill is concerned, it is the capability of identifying communicative goals during the process of interaction. The main goal of communicative skills is to acquire certain social outcomes using various interpretations and symbolic resources. Communication skill is a latent construct that cannot be measured directly. It is developed through conscious effort same as physical and cognitive skills. The people can be reinforced or motivated to demonstrate skills to their maximum level. When the individuals are willing to perform social skills to their maximum level, these can be observed. On the contrary, sometimes the individuals do not express these skills to their best level of capacity for the observer to estimate the level of possession of these skills. It also becomes difficult to identify whether the individual is skillful in these skills or not. To overcome this difficulty and to estimate the possession of these skills the

individuals are provided some of the problem situations and it is required from these individuals that by trying their best and by putting their best effort they progress towards the achievement of identified communicative objectives. In this way, their shown behavior during the problem-solving process can be coded and they can be ranked at the different levels of skillfulness. This approach, for example, has been used to assess skills in producing highly adaptive persuasive, informative and comforting messages (Burlison, 1987).

It has been mentioned earlier that, in a child's life school is of paramount importance. To achieve the basic goals of education for instance the social development of children, teachers must possess high-quality social skills. Because modeling good behaviors is the best way of teaching any type of skills including cognitive skills, social skills, and moral skills. According to past research, a teacher must be democratic, tender, patient, reliable, and humorous to his/her students during the period s/he interacts with students. As well as teachers should use attractive and effective ways of communication to transmit his/her ideas, information, and ideology to students. A teacher should exhibit eminent verbal, and nonverbal behavior while managing classroom activities (Acikgoz 1996; Pehlivan, 2005; Karadag., & Caliskan, 2009). According to Acikgoz, (1996) if teachers possess these characteristics it will positively affect their students and will also improve the quality of the teaching process. The results of the study of Saka and Surmeli (2010) pointed out that the perception of the communication skills of the teacher was found high. These results were consistent with other studies in the literature (Gursimsek et al., 2008; Pehlivan, 2005). Researchers found that teachers who continue primary education had a high level of communication skills (Gursimsek et al., 2008; Pehlivan, 2005). Discussing the communication skills in teachers Kenneth (2007) said that in the absence of communication skills in teachers the teaching-learning process will not be effective. Moreover, if the teacher will be equipped with effective communication skills this will ensure a successful teaching process and will create a good environment for learning.

Possession of social skills is the most crucial aspect of human behavior to be successful in life and for better adjustment to society. Education is the source through which these skills can be developed in individuals and teachers are the most responsible for the transmission of these skills. This study identified to which extent these skills were present among the prospective teachers of IER which is a renowned institute of teacher training in the country. The findings of this study might provide evidence for the need for social training programs to overcome the deficiencies in social skills among prospective teachers.

Material and Methods

Research Design

To investigate this problem, a descriptive research design was chosen. Survey was conducted by using social skills development scale as data collection tool.

Population

The population of this study consisted of all the prospective teachers enrolled in nine programs being offered in institute of Education and Research, University of

the Punjab. The number of students enrolled in Bachelors (4 years), B.Ed (1.5 years), Masters (2 years) and MPhil (2 years) is approximately 3000 (derived from the total number of seats mentioned in prospectus of the institute.

Sampling

The data was collected from six departments based on convenience bases, the unit of response was students, who were selected as cluster from bachelors, final year classes. The total number of sample that took part in the study was 162 respondents (spread of sample is explained in table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics representing spread of sample

Departments	N	Mean	Std	Min	Max
MERA	5	136.20	2.77	134	141
M. S. ED	42	133.21	18.20	93	168
ELTL	14	129.92	15.29	102	152
ISLAMIC	67	132.67	17.73	53	164
EDUCATION	34	132.20	17.67	84	160
M.A Elementary	162	132.59	17.43	53	168
Total					

Instrument

The data was collected through a survey instrument entitled “social skills group assessment questionnaire. This instrument was developed by Goldstein and Pollock (1988) and is still considered as authentic toll to collect data on social skills (Eceiza, Arrieta, & Goñi, 2008). The instrument is composed of six dimensions with fifty items. First three sections of the instrument are dedicated to identify social skills from basic to advance level of social skills, while the other three sections focus on skills of respondents to deal with emotions, stress and planning. The score of the instrument were divided into three categories ranging from 17-19; 20-22 and 23-25.

The instrument has established validity and reliability analysis, so the current study relied on previously established validity analysis. However, owing to the influence of respondents’ characteristics, number and other features on value of reliability, the Cronbach alpha was calculated. The results indicate value of Cronbach alpha was .89, that is closer to previously established (Morán et al., 2018; Miranda-Zapata et al., 2014) value of reliability coefficient (.90).

Data Analysis

The instrument was administered personally by visiting the classes after taking permission from authorities of the institute. The respondents were informed about purpose of the study and were clarified about process of data collection. Only the respondents, who agreed to take part in the study voluntarily were considered as sample of the study. Later, the surreys were scrutinized to identify the incomplete responses, however, the response ratio was better and all the instruments were complete, thus included during analysis. The data was analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics as per requirement of the objectives and research questions of the study. For example the t-test was run to identify the existing difference in social skills development concerning their background study. The subjects were having two types of backgrounds: B.A and B.Sc. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was run to

identify the difference among students' social skills development levels in different programs of IER. Furthermore, a post hoc test was applied to measure the actual difference.

Results and Discussion

One-way Analysis of Variance was run to see the mean difference in social skills development level of different departments of IER. The results are given below in table 02.

Table 2
One-way Analysis of Variance for mean difference with respect to department

Sources of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between group	186.155	4	46.539	.153	.961
Within group	47717.135	157	303.931		
Total	47903.290	161			

It is evident from the above table that no significant difference in the social skills development level in the students of different departments. So we can say that our null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the social skills development level of students of different departments.

Independent-samples t-test was run to identify the mean difference in the development of social skills in the students of different departments of IER. Results are shown in table 03.

Table 3
Independent-samples t-test for mean difference in social skills development with respect to students' background

Variables	Background	N	Df	Mean	t-value	sig
Social skills	B.A	120	160	132.37	.273	.785
	B.Sc	42		133.21		

The above table indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean scores students having different backgrounds. In this we can say that our null hypothesis that there is on significant difference in the mean scores of students having a background of B.A and B.Sc is accepted. So it is concluded that there is on significant difference in the mean scores of students having a background of B.A and B.Sc.

Discussion

In the light of these results, it is concluded that the subjects being taught in these programs are effective in the development of social skills level in the prospective teachers. Therefore, it can be inferred that this development in candidate teachers will also be effective for their students as Acikoz (1996) has reported that if teachers possess these characteristics, it will affect their students and will also improve the quality of the teaching process. If teachers will possess a high level of social skills, it will help develop a good relationship with their students during their practical life.

Elective courses are usually aimed at improving individuals' knowledge, techniques, and skills, enhancing their participation in cultural activities, and developing social skills. Keeping in view these functions of elective courses it can be said that these elective courses improve individuals socially and culturally.

Strahan (2003) conducted a study on finding out the relationship between social skills and academic success and he concluded that a lack of social skills development leads to low academic success. So, this study indicated that academic success is co-related with social skills development and this relationship is positive. The present study aimed to investigate whether the content of different subjects makes any difference in this development. Hence, between-group one-way ANOVA results showed that there is no significant difference in social skills development level.

Discussing the effectiveness of social skills for students Cetin et al., (2003) stated that those students who possess a high level of social skills take more interest and participate more in activities and they have more decision-making power. Many researchers such as Margeson, Reider, and Campion (2005) described that possession of social skills not only positively affects the performance but also results in acceptance by peers, academic success, more school adjustment, greater self-awareness, and good interpersonal relations.

Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the social skills development level of prospective teachers at IER. Further, it was investigated that is there any difference in this development in the students selecting different programs in this institute. The results of this study showed that on the basis of elective subjects, there is no significant difference in social skills development and these skills have equally been developed in students of all programs being offered in IER. In the light of these results, it is concluded that the subjects being taught in these programs are effective in the development of social skills level in the prospective teachers. It is also concluded that this development in candidate teachers will also be effective for their students as Acikoz (1996) has reported that if teachers possess these characteristics, it will affect their students and will also improve the quality of teaching process. If teachers will possess high level of social skills, it will be helpful in developing good relationship with their students during their practical life.

Recommendations

Based on results of the study the following recommendations can be drawn;

- Addressing to delimitation of the study the social skills of prospective teachers from other teacher training institutes (both public and private) should also be examined.
- Keeping in view the changing dynamics of society due to pandemic, the future studies with larger sample size may also establish validity (by both exploratory and confirmatory) factor analysis.

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