Relationship Of Psychosocial Factors And Academic Performance With Mediation Effect Of Social Competence

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the impact of psychosocial factors on the academic performance of university students in Pakistan. It focused on three main variables: psychosocial factors, social competence, and academic performance. The study involved 4708 university students from all over the country. SEM analysis technique was used for the study. Tool for the psychosocial factors was adapted while self-constructed tool for the social competence was used for the data collection. The results showed that social integration, perceived social support, and effort-reward imbalance were significant factors influencing academic performance. Social competence also played a significant mediator role in this relationship. The study recommends that university administration consider psychosocial factors in curricula and plan activities that foster social competence and positive attitudes.

Keywords: Psychosocial factors, social competence, academic performance

Introduction

Education aims to shape a student's personality dimensions, preparing them for life roles and academic achievements. Social competence, which includes social, emotional, and intellectual skills, is influenced by psychosocial factors and societal, cultural, and environmental factors. These factors, influenced by competitions, social roles, and pressures in areas like health, technology, social work, and education, are interrelated and impact academic performance.

Social competence is an extension of social adjustment, encompassing positive social behaviour, emotion regulation, pro-social behaviours, and communication skills. It is influenced by self-awareness, pessimism, adaptability, and achievement orientation. A continuous assessment system measures all aspects of university students' academic performance, including attendance, presentation skills, and practical proficiency.

Psychosocial variables significantly impact students' academic performance, with factors such as help-seeking, academic motivation, self-esteem, stress, and social support significantly affecting their performance. Positive influencing factors include test competence, time management, test anxiety, and strategic studying.

University students' academic and social competence are influenced by factors that fulfil their educational and social life requirements, including teacher and peer relationships, personal life relations, and social life relations. Perceived social support, motivation, test anxiety, help-seeking behaviour, and stress are predictors of academic adjustment among university students.

Problem Statement

The study was made to investigate relationship of psychosocial factors on academic performance of university students observing mediation effect of social competence. The psychosocial factors were observed under seven sub-variables i.e., social integration, perceived social support, optimism, pessimism, effort-reward imbalance, psychological wellbeing and self-efficacy.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the relationship of the psychosocial factors with the academic performance of university students.
2. To find out the relationship between the social competence and academic performance of university students.
3. To explore the mediation effect of the social competence in the relationship of psychosocial factors, and academic performance of university students.

Significance of the Study

The study explores the impact of psychosocial factors on university students' social competence and academic performance. It aims to inform educational practitioners, such as teachers and administrators, to develop appropriate instruction and incorporate these findings into core curricula. By focusing on positive psychosocial factors like optimism, psychological well-being, and self-efficacy, the study can foster students' competence building and academic performance. It also provides action research to reveal students' ratings of institutions, teachers, and learning environments, which can help improve quality in higher education. The study also helps students identify positive and negative influencing psychosocial factors, such as time management and self-regulation, which can help them manage their careers and avoid negative outcomes like academic failure, social rejection, and violence.

Study Delimitations

Delimitations of the study define its working boundaries such as:

1. It excluded university diplomas, distance, and formal education system comparisons, which delimited its findings towards the vast applicability.
2. The next delimitation was the selection of the psychosocial variables which could best measure up the lifestyle of university students. These included eight psychosocial factors in the study i.e. (i) type of social network - social integration; (ii) contact with social network - social integration; (iii) perceived social support; (iv) effort-reward imbalance; (v) optimism; (vi) pessimism; (vii) and psychological wellbeing.
3. The sample was taken from the accessible population only. The Gilgit Baltistan University was excluded from the sample.

Literature Review

The study investigates the influence of psychosocial factors on university students' social competence and academic performance. It aims to inform educators to develop appropriate instruction and incorporate these findings into core curricula. Positive psychosocial factors like optimism, psychological well-being, and self-efficacy can foster competence building and academic performance (Lozano-Peña et al., 2021). The study also provides an ample to reveal students' ratings of institutions, teachers, and learning environments, improving higher education quality. It helps students identify positive and negative influencing psychosocial factors, such as time management and self-regulation, to manage their careers and avoid negative outcomes like academic failure, social rejection, and violence (Osvaldsson Cromdal & Cromdal, 2019; Taborsky & Oliveira, 2012).

The concepts of psychosocial factors and social competence are rooted in Erikson and Freud's theories of psychosocial and psychosexual development (Hebert-Myers et al., 2006). The literature review is divided into five sections, including definitions, theories, factors influencing academic performance, theories representing the interconnectedness of psychosocial factors, and models used to measure social competence as a predictor of academic performance (Aarkrog, 2017).

Social Competence

Social competence refers to the ability of individuals to solve life problems, achieve goals, and become successful members of society. It encompasses social, emotional, and intellectual skills and behaviours necessary for successful adaptation (Aarkrog, 2017). Gedviliene et al. (2014) summarised the words of Reitz, who the socially competent behaviour as the attitude which leads to a specific situation in which a person achieves his goals, guaranteeing the social acceptance of behaviours.

Social competence is a field of interest in various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, pathology, social work (Rose-Krasnor, 1997), linguistics (Tariq & Masood, 2011), management sciences (Kuranchie & Addo, 2021a), and education. Errors in social competence development can lead to flaws in personality, leading to maladaptation in life (Magelinskaitė et al., 2014).

Imbalances in social competence development

Researches indicated various drastic outcomes of neglecting social competence development. Process of social competence development starts with the first interpersonal attachment of a child to his parents (Nichols, 2002). Taking a balance care of child leads to positive and neglecting him brings contrary affects on child's personality (Lee et al., 2010). Erikson says, each stage of development has some pre-requisites, ignoring which puts unavoidable and permanent question marks in his behaviours (Elias & Haynes, 2008). These question marks include various personality disorders, termed as Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) (Dennis et al., 2007; Iqbal et al., 2013).

Historical Development of the Concept

Roots of the concept social competence goes to early 1920s with the evolution of concept of cognitive development. The work of Piaget, Erikson and Bandura are prominent milestone of this journey. Further advancement in psychology, led to improvement of this concept. (Kuranchie and Addo (2021b) defined social competence in terms of establishing effective social interactions among new people. According to them, it has four basic elements i.e., social skills, sociometric status, relationships, and functional outcomes.

As mentioned in above section, there is no agreed upon definition of social competence, so the latest modified definition of social competence is associated with social, and institutional, adjustment process (Magelinskaitė et al., 2014). For university students, it in more vast spectrum and includes social skills, and cognitive functions that lead juveniles to do better academic performance, and to play better role in the life afterwards (Etel & Yagmurlu, 2015). The pre-requisite components of social competence in this context involve independent actions, leadership, and cooperative behaviours (Junge et al., 2020; Pilch, 2008). Aggression, assertiveness, empathy, confidence and social skills are also hallmarks of social competence (Finne & Svartdal, 2017; Hukkelberg et al., 2019; Waters, 1983).

The maladjustment and negative behaviours among university students are results of flaws in social competence development. The development which is influenced by psychological and social issues associated with growth (Dodge, 1985; Yager & Iarocci, 2013).

Elements of social competence

The composition formula of social competence includes various concepts. Kuznekoff et al. (2012) classified three major and ten sub-dimensions of social competence. Narula (2017) described eighteen different factors of social competence. Perzigian (2018) identifies twenty-nine facets of social competence. Yager and Iarocci (2013) Defined cognitive, affective and motor skills to social competence. Gedviliene, et al. (2014) categorised it into only two i.e., cognitive and non-cognitive. The cognitive included perception of social interactions, while the later involved the application of those perceptions. (Romera et al., 2016) linked it to 'big-five' personality traits.

(Mitchell, 2020)identified pessimism, emotional regulation, self-efficacy, confidence, sympathy/empathy, intimacy, assertiveness, social initiative, and conflict resolution skills as the main elements of social competence in adolescence.

Summing up the discussion, in present study, social competence was divided into five sub-components in context of university students. These components included social skills, behavioural skills (positive and negative), cognitive skills, emotional skills, and interpersonal communication skills.

The development process of social competence, is contingent on psychosocial factors i.e., the social factors which form psychology of child.

Psychosocial Factors as the Predictor of Academic Performance

The psychosocial factors that affect a person's personality development, vary with respect to his physical development. In university life, such factors include the all challenges which students face in gaining their autonomy and adaptation to the faces of maturity (Corredor et al., 2017). These factors lead to the emotional fluctuations and perception of academic overload towards better quality of life (de Swart et al., 2023; Gouley et al., 2008). There is a list of such influential substances cited by different researches.

Ma and Wang (2019) identified social integration as major influential element of social competence. It refers to the extent and breadth of an individual's attachment to his social circle. Students struggling to establish supportive social networks may face difficulties in getting support, leading to feelings of alienation and isolation, leading to negative attitudes and eventual dropout from university.

The other researchers like Phil Kuranchie and Addo (2015) added social support to the significant influential force over students' personality. It refers to success of gaining others' support, to adjust in society. Research has shown that perceived social support reduces alienation, anxiety, and stress in university students, boosting their adjustment process (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2022). It is further categorised into positive and negative social support related to the respective outcomes.

Persons' self-thoughts also act as important psychosocial factors. These thoughts are nominated as optimism, and pessimism. The optimism refers to the positive approach to the subjective experiences. It is also called as hope for sustainability (Tan & Tan, 2013). While pessimism is its reciprocal. Hence, pessimism stands for the feelings of frustration and despair (Mahasneh et al., 2013).
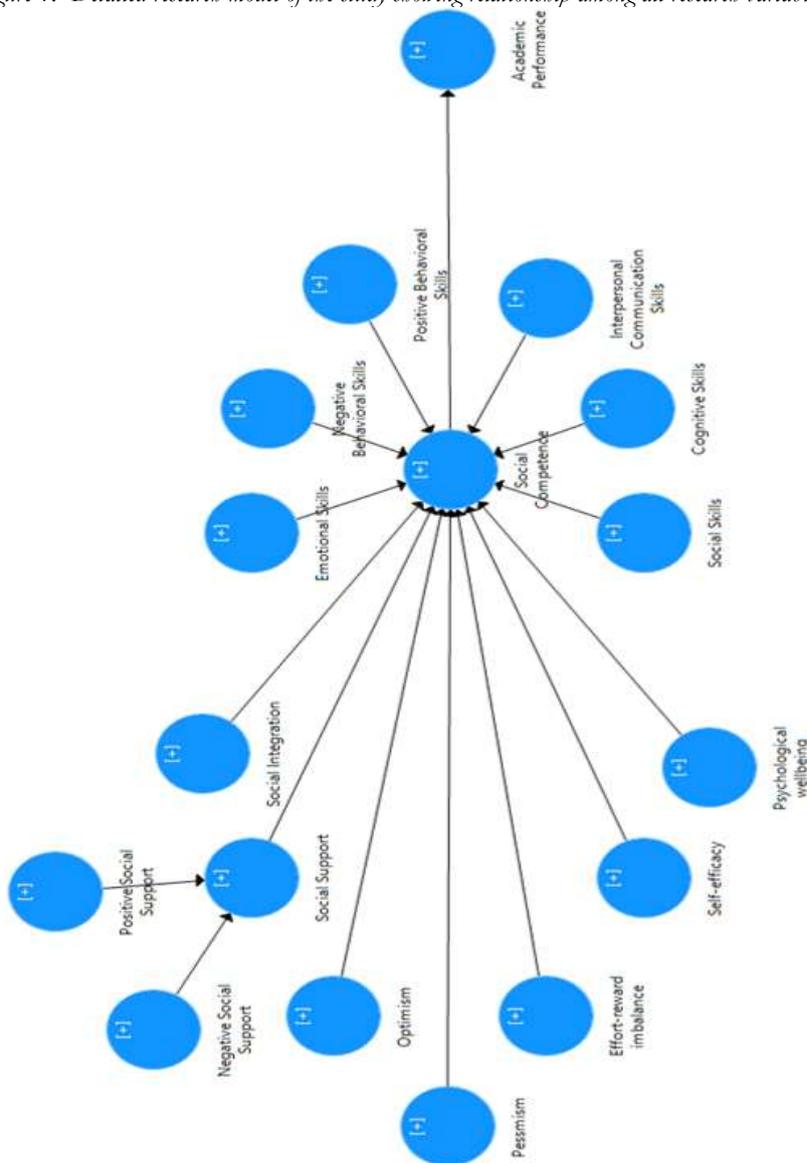
Effort-reward imbalance is another important psychosocial factor that caters individuals' career and academic lifestyle especially. It refers to the feeling of frustration with respect to their efforts or struggles (Evans et al., 2014; Hamdan-mansour et al., 2014; Narmandakh et al., 2021). This is called as negative influence psychosocial factor that leads to the work-shirking attitudes.

Summing up the above discussion, the psychosocial factors included in the present study included social integration, social support (Positive and negative), optimism, pessimism, effort-reward imbalance, self-efficacy, and psychological wellbeing.

Research Framework

The research framework for this study is derived from Tinto and Cullen's 'college dropout theory' and adjustment models by Petersen et al (2009) and Sommer (2013). A detailed path model is presented, illustrating relationships between latent constructs based on research objectives and hypotheses.

Figure 1: Detailed research model of the study showing relationship among all research variables

Study Design
Descriptive research explores phenomena, such as the relationship between psychosocial variables and academic and social competencies of university students. Path analysis is a powerful technique for identifying causation and effect among multiple variables. Fraenkel et al. (2012) use structural equational modelling (SEM) to confirm causation among variables. The study's completion includes instrumentation, validity, reliability, data collection methods, sampling procedures, and data analysis procedures.
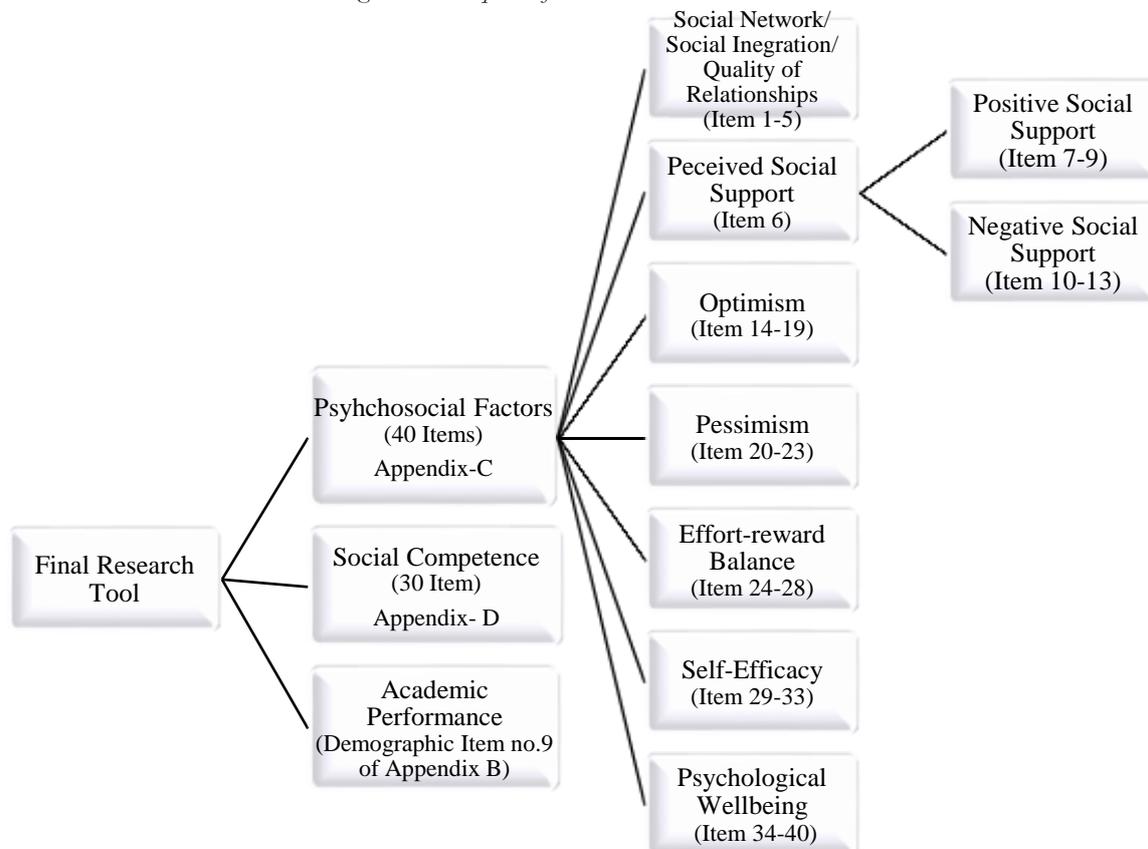
Research Instrument
The questionnaire used in the study comprised of the following structure:
1. Part 1 comprised of the questions related to the demographic characteristics of the participants of the study. The same part included a self-report question for the students' previous cumulative grade point average (PCGPA) [Appendix- B].
2. Part II comprised of the questions relating to the psychosocial factors. It included seven subscales i.e., social network - Social Integration, perceived social support, optimism, pessimism, effort-reward imbalance, self-efficacy, and psychological wellbeing. A detailed description of each scale is given in the previous section. The tool was taken from different sources as described in the previous sections, optimized to the proper length to accommodate all variables of the study (Appendix-C).
3. Part III comprised of the questions related to the social competence of the students. This scale was self-prepared and comprised of the yes/no responses to determine the maximum or minimum value of the social competence of students. The questionnaire included 30 items; therefore, the maximum value of the social competence was considered as 30, and

the minimum value of the social competence was considered as 0. Between these extremes, the scores were equally divided into three halves to determine low, medium, and high social competence (Appendix- D).

4. The description of the final scale is represented by the Figure.

Figure 2: Description of the Final Research Instrument

Validation of the Research Instrument
The research instrument was validated by four facets i.e., content, face and construct validated.

Content validity: it was assessed by field experts, who approved or suggested improvements. The final version of the instrument was based on 80% approval from experts.

Face validity: it was measured through a pilot study, which involved 600 participants from three public sector universities in Punjab. The results showed a 30–50-minute completion time and a simple, understandable Urdu translation. The pilot study also highlighted the need for student instruction before administering the tool.
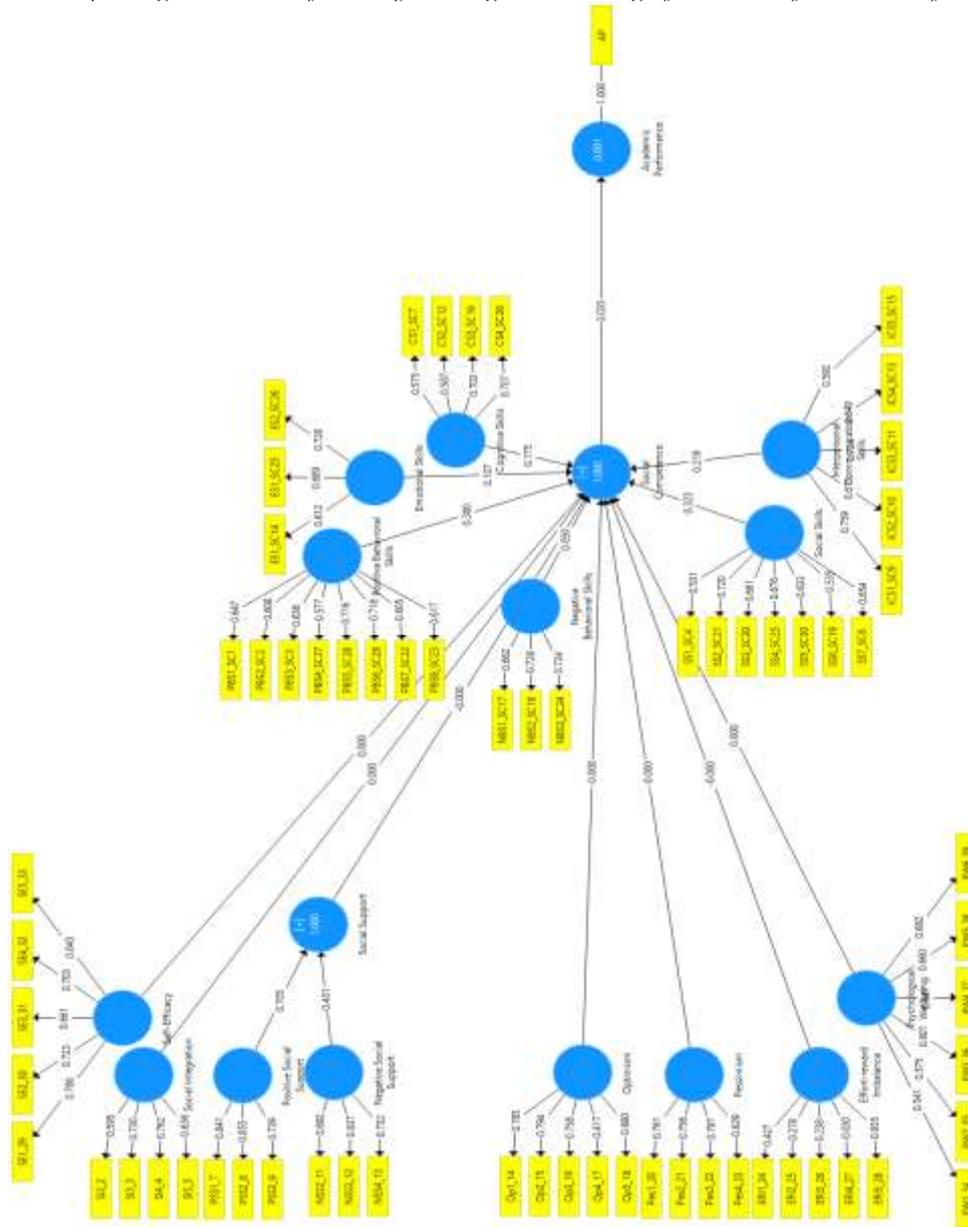The final tool was modified in the light of above processes in terms of unnecessary variables, language issues, etc.

Construct validity: it measures the true sense of concepts through factors loadings and cross-loading. Hair et al. recommend a loading of.40, with a convergent and discriminant validity of.70, and a minimum of.40 as acceptable.
The study's construct validity was assessed using factor loading analysis, which focuses on acceptance or rejection of factors. The variables included social integration, positive social support, pessimism, positive behavioural skills, negative behavioural skills, emotional skills, interpersonal communication skills, and cognitive skills. However, some variables had weak items, such as negative social support, optimism, self-efficacy, effort-reward imbalance, and psychological wellbeing. Hair et al. (2018) suggested that 20% of weaker items could be eliminated to enhance the tool's validity. The study found that three weaker items out of five were not removed from the negative social support, optimism, self-efficacy, effort-reward imbalance, and psychological wellbeing constructs.
However, these items were kept as weaker constructs in the final analysis. The initial factor loading analysis showed all latent variables and their indicators under the study work-plan. The next table pre-sets the re-analysis of the factor loading after the removal of the weak items from the aforementioned constructs.
Re-analysis of the constructs after removal of weaker items revealed that the removal did not affect the second order value of the constructs. This indicated that the lower value of the item loading could be ignored. Therefore, these items were kept in the final instrument as their original form. This is described in the Figure.

Figure 3: Relationship among the Variables of the Study, Showing Factor Loading After Removal of Weak Items of Each Construct

Discriminant validity: this was the last validation step of the instrument refinement process. It refers to the item differentiation from the rest of the construct, ensuring distinct concepts are measured. Lack of discriminant validity indicates overlapping concepts and ambiguity. Hair et al. (2018) suggest that the average variance of each construct should be greater than the highest squared correlation. The all constructs in the tool have good discrimination validity, as their first-round discriminant validity value was greater than other underlying values.

Reliability Analysis

The reliability analysis of instruments was conducted using Cronbach Alpha, which estimates internal consistency reliability by determining how all items on a test relate to each other and the overall test. Acceptable reliability criteria range from excellent to acceptable. However, the reliability of personality constructs is not usually high, and psychological constructs can be used even with slightly lower reliability values.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis of the Psychosocial Factors

Variables	Sample size = 4708		
	Scale	Reliability Statistics	
		Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Psychosocial FactorsSocial network/ Social Integration		.58	5
	Perceived social support	.56	7

	Effort-reward imbalance	.66	4
	Optimism	.64	6
	Pessimism	.72	4
	Effort-reward imbalance	.62	5
	Self-efficacy	.57	5
	Psychological wellbeing	.69	6
	Overall, the scale	.80	42
Social Competence	Positive behavioural skills	.80	8
	Negative behavioural skills	.50	3
	Emotional skills	.41	3
	Social Skills	.74	7
	Cognitive skills	.53	4
	Interpersonal skills	.69	5
	Total Social Competence	.89	30

The reliability analysis of the psychosocial factors scale showed acceptable reliability values for social network, perceived social support, and self-efficacy, while others had good reliability values. The overall reliability value for psychosocial factors was.80. The social competence scale included questions on positive, negative, emotional, social, cognitive, and interpersonal communication skills.

The table also shows the reliability analysis of the social competence scale, revealing high reliability for positive behavioural skills (.80), negative behavioural skills (.50), emotional skills (.41), social skills (.74), cognitive skills (.53), and interpersonal skills (.69).

Population of the Study

The study involved 1229393 students from 186 Pakistani universities, with a total enrolment of 1580868. The demographic characteristics of the students were not found in the literature, but they were categorized into administrative units, gender, university sector, and program of study.

Sampling Procedure of the Study
1.1.1.1 Sample Size of the Study

Adequate sample size is crucial for good research, ensuring an optimum number of participants to meet study requirements. Gay et al. (2011) suggests a minimum of 30 participants for experimental, correlational, or causal-comparative studies. The sample proportion is related to variables and population size.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

n	=	Sample size (to be calculated)
N	=	Population Size
N	=	1229393 (total population in all units)
While total number of **administrative** units	=	7
N for each **administrative** unit	=	$\frac{1229393}{7}$
N	=	175627.6
e	=	Level of Significance
	=	.05

Putting these values in the given equation, we get.

$$n = \frac{175627.6}{1 + 175627.6 \, (.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{175627.6}{1 + 175627.6 \, (.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{175627.6}{1 + 439}$$

$$n = \frac{175627.6}{440}$$

n	=	399 for each administrative unit
While, total number of provinces/ administrative units	=	07
So total estimated sample size	=	399×7
	=	2794 approx.

The study's minimum sample size was set at 400, but due to the diverse population of 186 universities in Pakistan, it was deemed insufficient. To ensure maximum diversity and representation, the planned sample size was increased to 5000. However, after data collection and redundancies, the actual sample remained 4708.

1.1.1.2 Sampling Technique of the Study

The study used probability and non-probability sampling techniques to avoid bias and reduce errors. Probability sampling was used for a known population, while non-probability sampling was appropriate for an unknown population. For studies involving specific groups or subgroups, stratified random sampling was more appropriate. The sample included 1229393 and 186 universities, with students enrolled in full-time regular programs. However, access to remote areas was limited, so cluster sampling was used instead.

This method was divided into multistage stages, with universities selected as clusters and selected randomly. The 25 universities were randomly selected from all over Pakistan.

Table 2: Sampling Plan for the Study

Population	Total universities	186
	Total enrolment	1229393
Sampling (Multistage cluster sampling)	Stage I	Based on provincial distribution
	Stage II	Based on universities (randomly)

The study aimed to ensure accurate data analysis by dividing the population into clusters based on administrative unit density, with more clusters from Punjab, Islamabad, Sindh, Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhunkhah, and Azad Jammu & Kashmir. Precautions included personal visits to universities and extra questionnaires.

Findings
Analysis Regarding Relationship of Psychosocial Factors with Academic Performance

The relationship of the psychosocial factors with the academic performance was made by multiple regression analysis, and one-way ANOVA to find out the test of homogeneity for the unequal data, and correlations.

Table 3:   Regression Coefficients between Psychosocial Factors and Academic Performance

Variables	Model 1	Correlations			Regression		ANOVA Change	
	Coefficients	Pearson	Partial	Sig.	B SDt	Sig.F	Sig. R^2	
Psychosocial Factors	(Constant)				2.545.0643.65.00			
	Social Integration	.014	.010	.32	.001 .00.72	.47		
	Perceived Positive Social Support	.037	.072	.10	.018 .004.96	.00		
	Perceived Negative Social Support	-.063	-.073	.00	-.021 .00-5.01	.00		
	Optimism	-.024	-.021	.10	-.003 .00-1.47	.14	4.308.000^b.013	
	Pessimism	-.025	.002	.09	.000 .00.16	.87		
	Effort-reward imbalance	-.061	-.057	.00	-.010 .00-3.88	.00		
	Self-Efficacy	-.019	-.008	.19	-.002 .00-.58	.56		
	Psychosocial Wellbeing	-.017	-.006	.24	.000 .00-.43	.67		

a. **Predictors:** (Constant), Social Network -Social Integration, Perceived Social Support, Optimism, Pessimism, Self-efficacy, Effort-Reward Imbalance, Psychological Wellbeing.
b. **Dependent Variable:** PCGPA

The study analysed the relationship between psychosocial factors and academic performance in university students. Pearson correlation showed a two-way relationship, while partial correlation indicated a unidirectional effect. The results showed a significant negative relationship between academic performance and two psychosocial factors: perceived negative social support and effort-reward imbalance. The study also found that 1.3% variation in students' academic performance could be attributed to psychosocial factors, including social network, perceived social support, effort-reward imbalance, optimism, pessimism, self-efficacy, and psychological wellbeing. The beta co-efficient revealed that perceived positive social support had a significant positive correlation with academic performance, while perceived negative social support and effort-reward imbalance were significant negative predictors.

The results supported the null hypothesis that social integration had no significant relationship with academic performance. The study also found that optimism, pessimism, effort-reward imbalance, self-efficacy, and psychological wellbeing had no significant relationship with academic performance.

The study found that social support and effort-reward imbalance are good predictors of academic performance in their direct relationship. However, social integration had an insignificant correlation with academic performance, while perceived positive and negative social support had significant correlations. Optimism, pessimism, and effort-reward imbalance had no significant relationship with academic performance. Self-efficacy and psychological wellbeing had no significant correlation with academic performance, and psychological wellbeing had no significant relationship with academic performance. The null hypothesis "perceived social support has no significant relationship with academic performance of university students" was rejected. The study suggests that these factors may not significantly impact academic performance in university students.

Analysis Regarding Relationship of Social Competence and Academic Performance

Correlation, Multiple regression analysis, and one-way ANOVA was made to find out the relationship between social competence and academic performance as described in the table below.
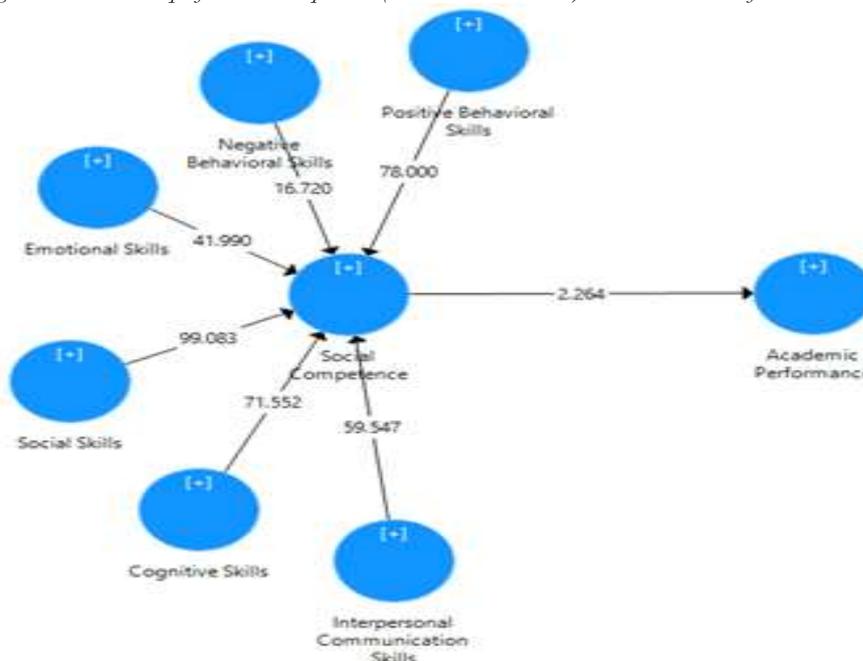
Table 4:   Regression Coefficients between Social Competence and Academic Performance

Coefficients										
Model 1	Correlations			Regression				ANOVA Change		
	Pearson	Partial	Sig.	B	SE	t	Sig.	F	Sig.	R²
(Constant)				3.293	.022	102.364	.00			
Social Competence	.28	.24	.05	.233	.013	2.968	.03			
Cognitive Skills	.016	-.019	.27	.031	.018	1.296	.01			
Interpersonal Communication Skills	.48	.41	.00	.05	.016	.286	.78	4.05	.00	.063
Negative Behaviour Skills	-.05	-.04	.00	-.047	.016	-2.896	.00			
Social Skills	.29	-.13	.03	-.014	.015	-1.893	.04			
Positive Behavioural Skills	.024	-.009	.10	-.010	.015	-.645	.52			
Emotional Skills	.020	-.006	.18	-.007	.017	-.397	.69			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Skills, Negative Behaviour Skills, Interpersonal Communication Skills, Cognitive Skills, Social Skills, Positive Behavioural Skills, Social Competence
b. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

The study found a significant relationship between social competence and academic performance, with Pearson correlation indicating a two-way relationship. Interpersonal communication skills and social skills showed a significant correlation with academic performance, while negative behavioural skills had a negative correlation. Cognitive skills, positive behavioural skills, and emotional skills were non-significantly correlated with academic performance. Social competence predicted 23.3% positive significant change in academic performance, while cognitive skills caused 3.1% and negative behavioural skills caused 4.7%. Social skills had a negative relationship with academic performance, causing 1.4% negative change. ANOVA statistics showed a highly significant effect of social competence on academic performance, with a r2 value of.063, indicating a 6.3% variation in students' performance.

Figure 4: Relationship of Social Competence (as 2nd order construct) and Academic Performance

The study found a significant correlation between social competence and academic performance in university students. Social competence, as a second-order construct, could cause a positive change of 23.3% in academic performance. However, further analysis revealed that cognitive skills, interpersonal communication skills, negative behavioural skills, social skills, positive behavioural skills, and emotional skills had insignificant correlations. Cognitive skills had an insignificant correlation, while interpersonal communication skills had a significant correlation. Negative behavioural skills had a negative correlation, while social skills had a positive correlation. Positive behavioural skills had an insignificant correlation, and emotional skills had an insignificant correlation.

Analysis Regarding the Mediating Effect of the Social Competence between Psychosocial Factors and Academic Performance of university students

Analysis regarding the research objective, the role of the social competence among the effect of psychosocial factors over the academic performance of university students was made using the mediation analysis.

Table 5: Direct and indirect Effect of Psychosocial Factors on Academic Performance

IV=Psychosocial Factors	Mediating variable =Social Competence, DV = Academic Performance							
	β		SD		t-Value		Sig.	
	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect
Social Integration	0.066	.147	0.01	.015	7.00	9.80	0.00	0.00
Positive Social Support	0.129	0.249	0.02	0.016	6.45	15.56	0.00	0.00
Negative Social Support	0.091	0.109	0.01	0.013	-9.1	46.85	0.00	0.00
Optimism	-.003	0.148	0.01	.017	-1.47	8.73	0.43	0.01
Pessimism	-.005	-0.105	0.002	0.012	2.63	8.539	0.01	0.00
Self-efficacy	0.001	0.033	0.001	0.016	1.676	2.107	0.09	0.04
Effort-reward Imbalance	0.003	0.061	0.001	0.015	2.246	4.008	0.02	0.00
Psychological wellbeing	0.007	0.154	0.002	0.016	2.715	9.718	0.01	0.00

Direct Effect = Psychosocial Factors -> Academic Performance

Indirect Effect = Psychosocial Factors -> Social Competence -> Academic Performance

The study examines the relationship between psychosocial factors and academic performance in university students. It found that social integration, positive social support, optimism, pessimism, self-efficacy, effort-reward imbalance, and psychological wellbeing all have a significant impact on academic performance. A 1% increase in social integration leads to a 7.0% increase in academic performance, while a 1% increase in positive social support can lead to a 12.9% decrease. Social competence partially mediates this relationship, enhancing academic performance by 24.9%.

On the other hand, negative social support has a significant negative relationship with academic performance, but social competence significantly mediates this relationship, turning it into a positive direction. In the presence of social competence, negative social support can enhance academic performance to 10.9%.

Opportunity has an insignificant negative relationship with academic performance, but social competence significantly mediates this relationship, turning it into a significant increase of 14.8%. Pessimism has a negative relationship with academic performance, but social competence partially mediates this relationship, resulting in a 3.3% increase in academic performance. Effort-reward imbalance has a significant relationship with academic performance, with a 1% increase in the construct causing a .3% increase. Social competence partially mediates this relationship, resulting in a 6.1% increase in academic performance. Psychological wellbeing also has a significant relationship with academic performance, with a 1% increase in psychological wellbeing leading to a .7% increase.

Figure 5: Conceptual diagram showing path coefficients of indirect relationships among the study variables

This diagram shows an indirect relationship between psychosocial factors and academic performance of university students, with social competence playing a mediation role. It further elaborates on positive and negative correlates.

The study shows that psychosocial factors significantly impact academic performance, with social competence playing a mediating role. Positive factors like psychological wellbeing and social support are most influential, followed by social competence. Pessimism has a negative impact. The results highlight the importance of these factors in academic success.

The study found that social integration, positive social support, optimism, pessimism, self-efficacy, effort-reward imbalance, and psychological wellbeing all had significant impacts on university students' academic performance. Social competence partially mediated these relationships, with social integration causing a 6.6% positive change and positive social support causing a 14.7% positive change. Positive social support caused a 12.9% negative change, while negative social support caused a 9.1% negative change. Social competence partially mediated the relationship between optimism and academic performance, with optimism causing a.3% negative change and pessimism causing a 10.5% negative change. Self-efficacy caused a 0.1% negative change, while effort-reward imbalance caused a 0.3% positive change.

Psychological wellbeing partially mediated the relationship between psychological wellbeing and academic performance, with psychological wellbeing causing a 0.7% positive change and 15.4% positive change. The study rejects the hypothesis that social competence has no mediation effect between these relationships.

Discussion

The study examined the relationship between psychosocial factors and academic performance in university students. Results showed that perceived social support and effort-reward imbalance were significant predictors of academic performance, while social integration, optimism, pessimism, self-efficacy, and psychological wellbeing were insignificant. Social competence also showed a positive relationship with academic performance, with social competence being a positive predictor. Demographic factors like gender, age, sibling position, and university sector were also found to be significantly associated with academic performance. Females and adolescents performed better than others, and no adult was found to be low achiever.

Conclusion

The study explores the relationship between psychosocial factors and academic performance in university students. It found that social integration is correlated with academic performance, but its effect may be influenced by other factors. Perceived social support is a significant predictor of academic performance, with positive support positively predicting academic performance and negative support negatively. Social competence has a significant relationship with academic performance, with interpersonal skills being the most influential. Social competence mediates between the effects of optimism and academic performance, while partially mediating between other psychosocial factors.

Demographic variables such as gender, age, sibling position, residential and provincial background, and university sector are significantly associated with academic performance, but the association is marginal. The study recommends that university administration, teachers, and parents focus on social competence to improve students' results and career adjustment. Further research is needed to explore further causes of this difference and to fill the gap between demographic groups and academic performance.

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