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## Impact Of Social Skills On High School Students' Academic Performance

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### Abstract

This research explores the relationship between social skills and academic performance among students of high schools in Punjab, Pakistan. Nine important social skills i.e., engagement with others, open mindedness, compound skills, task performance, emotional regulations, collaboration, self-regulations, ambiguity tolerance, and hierarchical relationship management – were studied to observe impact over the academic performance of the school students. Study employed a descriptive, survey research which involved a sample of 300 secondary school students from both public and private sector schools. A self-constructed questionnaire comprising 34 items was used for data collection. The data was analysed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Frequency, t-test and ANOVA were used for the data analysis. Findings indicated a significant impact of the social skills on academic performance of the students. Therefore, it was recommended that the integration of social skills instruction into the school curricula is essential to achieve better academic outputs.

**Keywords:** Social Skills, Academic Achievement, High School Students

### Introduction

Man being social animal – employs various means of expression of ideas, feelings and communication or interaction with others. These abilities are collectively known as social skills (Tabassum et al., 2024). More comprehensively, the social skills are defined as such verbal and non-verbal communication skills which may help to interact with society (Kashif et al., 2023). These may range from the conversation to appearance, gestures, and body language (Tabassum et al., 2020a). Lozano-Peña et al. (2021) further elaborate that social and behavioural skills are interconnected and sometimes overlapped with each other. According to them, the behavioural elements foster person's understanding and adaptability in various social contexts.

Kuranchie (2023) further asserted that the social skills enable a person to establish healthy social relationships, obtain better peer-support and acceptance, and facilitate transition to school. It was further elaborated that the social skills add to the emotional attachments, thus may make learning process more affective and productive (Devi et al., 2022; Pal Singh et al., 2023; Thompson, 2015). Therefore, the role of social skills to education has been declared as medium of meaningful learning process (Perzigian, 2018; Wells et al., 2015).

Academic performance on the other hand is defined as the measures of the extent to which the students succeed to achieve institutional or educational goals (Bolsoni-Silva et al., 2018). Researches indicated that social skills were highly connected to the academic performance. These are characterised by specific behavioural patterns that allow one to assess a person's level of social competence, social cognition, and control which in turn enable students to communicate in better ways with teachers, peers and all professional places (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; Tabassum et al., 2020b; Tabassum & Akhter, 2020).

### Research Objectives

RO 1. To find out the impact of social skills on academic performance of the secondary school students.

RO 2. To investigate the impact of demographic factors on the academic performance of the secondary school students.

### Research Questions

In the light of given research objective, following research questions were derived to guide the study i.e.,

RQ 1. What is the impact of social skills on academic performance of the secondary school students?

RQ 2. What is the impact of demographic factors on the academic performance of the secondary school students?

### **Research implications**

Potential research implications of the study are discussed in terms of educational curricula improvement; modification of teaching methods; assessment of students; and policy-making in accordance to the need of social skills in education.

### **Significance of the study**

For different stakeholders, the study carries following significant features.

- For students as primary focus of study, the study may help them to have self-awareness regarding social skills to boost up their learning process and perform in better ways.
- For parents and teachers, the study may help to make them aware of the importance of social skills in their child's academic success to encourage them and provide opportunities for their children to develop their personalities in terms of social skills at home and society at large. Teachers may do this by adopting different teaching strategies such as group projects, peer-learning, and class discussion.
- The school administration and policy makers can integrate social skills as part of school curricula and to advocate the importance of social skills development in educational policies.

### **Literature Review**

The literature indicates a close relationship of students' social skills and academic performance. Ansari and Gershoff (2016) made a study over the entanglement of social and academic skills, and found that the students who lacked social skills, may face difficulties in academic performance and vice versa. Similarly, literature also indicated that academic stress in high school level is very common and has significant negative impact on students' academic performance and wellbeing (Kashif et al., 2024; Taj et al., 2024). Further studies made by Wanzer et al. (2019) indicated that school peer non-academic skills comprise five important measures including collaboration skills – which exert most powerful influence over the academic performance of the students.

To strengthen the social skills various intervention programs at international level are organized for developing and fostering social skills among students. These programs include Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning organizations to support socio-emotional learning, which include Emotional ABCs Premium Schools, mindful practices and class catalyst passports, and peer group discussion panels for secondary school aged students (CASEL, 2020). Another interventions for promising students close social relationships, and character buildings, are initiated by OECD. They take initiatives for physical and learning activities of students, cultivating their meaning and purpose of life during pandemics, or disasters as well (OECD, 2021).

Literature also indicated specific social skills measured in studies in relation to the academic performance. As for example, two specific types of behaviours, linked to academic skills and academic performance were indicated by Li et al. (2019) and Romera et al. (2016) i.e., prosocial behaviours and peer-problems respectively. Pentaraki and Burkholder (2017) highlighted the significance of collaborative, and socio-emotional aspects of students' behaviours which were deeply connected to the cognition and engagement in classrooms. Kumari, Santha, and Chamundeswari (2015) asserted peer relationships affect academic performance with mediating factors as achievement motivation and learning engagement.

Thus, summing up literature in this paragraph indicates that prosocial behaviour, peer interactions, and collaboration skills influence students' learning engagements and motivations. Thus, ultimately – their academic performance. Further probe into literature indicated various factors which accompany social skills. These factors include demographic factors (Tabassum & Akhter, 2020); individual differences (Carvalho, 2016); time management skills (Mukhtarova, 2017); role of teachers (OECD, 2020); and home environments (Iqbal et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2021) of students.

Therefore, the study highlighted all necessary social skills which were ever used or not but found important for the secondary school students' academic performance i.e., engagement with others, open mindedness, compound skills, task performance, emotional regulations, collaboration, self-regulations, ambiguity tolerance, and hierarchical relationship management.

### **Research Methodology**

Research methodology was included the research design, population, sampling and sampling techniques, instrumentation, data collection and analysis. The design of research is descriptive and a survey was used for collecting the data. The population comprised of all school students of district jhang. The sample consisted of 400 students .initial sample was 400 but the data collection, various problems were observed e.g. some questionnaires were not returned, and out of the returned questionnaires, various items were found un-responded. Such cases were excluded from the final data analysis, which reduced the sample size. Therefore, the final sample was 300.

### **Research Instrument**

Main study variables were social skills and academic achievements. Perspective ability, emotional regulation, self-restrains, task performance, engagement with others and collaboration component of social skills were taken as sub variables. Taking these components and the study design Likert-scale questionnaire was considered as enough research tool for the study. Therefore the self-constructed questionnaire was prepared. It consisted of 34 items. The questionnaire was consisted two parts. One part of the questionnaire contains demographic information and second part consists of items related to the social skills and academic performance.

The questionnaire was content validated by ten experts and necessary modifications were made on the basis of their directions.

### Study findings

Self-prepared questionnaire was used for data collection. Five-point Likert scale was used as a research tool. The tool was duly translated in Urdu for the ease of comprehension of the users or students. The data gathered through the questionnaire, and using Statistical Package for Social Science SPSS for analysed. Both inferential and descriptive statics was used to analyse the data. In inferential statics T-Test and ANOVA was used.

Table 1: Distribution of Sample

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	137	40.7
	Female	163	48.4
School Sector	Private	134	39.8
	Public	166	49.3
Total		300	89.0

Table 1 describes distribution of sample across two demographic variables under study i.e., gender and school sector. The frequency and percentage of the male and female students indicates a balanced proportion of both genders (41% & 48% respectively). The proportion is not perfectly equal but, it is close. However, with respect to the school sector, there exist some variation i.e., the public sector representation is more than that of private sector.

Table 2: Impact of demographic variables on academic performance (t-test results)

Dependent variable: Academic performance			
Demographic Variables	T	Mean Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gender	.555	-.037	.703
School sector	-.870	-.408	.085

The table indicates the independent sample t-test to find out the group difference on bifurcated variables i.e., gender and school sector. The results were compared between two groups on the academic performance in last exams. The results indicated that both demographic variables had an insignificant mean difference on academic performance, which means that the demographic variables had insignificant impact on academic performance of the participants.

Table 3: Impact of social skills on academic performance (ANOVA results)

Dependent Variable: Last Exam					
Independent variable (Social Skills)	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	40.977	1	40.977	62.380	.000
Engagement with Others	8.338	9	.926	1.410	.186
Open Minded	11.512	11	1.047	1.593	.103
Compound Skills	5.330	11	.485	.738	.701
Task Performance	9.896	13	.761	1.159	.313
Emotional Regulation	3.504	11	.319	.485	.911
Collaboration	14.832	12	1.236	1.882	.039
self-regulation	16.075	13	1.237	1.882	.034
Ambiguity Tolerance	7.932	13	.610	.929	.524
Hierarchical Relationship Management	8.397	11	.763	1.162	.316
Total	1573.000	300			

The table indicates the results of study variable i.e., social skills on academic performance by one-way ANOVA. The table results indicate that only sub-variables "collaboration" and "self-regulation" had significant impact on the academic performance of the participants ( $p = .039$  &  $.034$  respectively). While, other variables had insignificant impact on academic performance of the students. However, the intercept value indicated  $p = .000$  which means that collective effect of all social skills had significant impact on academic performance of the students.

### Discussion

First objective of the study was to find out impact of social skills on academic performance of the high school students. Out of the nine selected study sub-variables of social skills, only two were found significant influencer on academic performance. These were "collaboration" and "self-regulation". This finding of the study approves many researches such as studies made by (Osvaldsson Cromdal and Cromdal, (2019). While the insignificant effect of the other seven social skills was also contrary to many studies such as researches made by Montroy et al. (2014); and researches made by (Iqbal et al., 2021). This contradiction suggest that the observed two social skills i.e., collaboration, and self-regulation may be important precursor of academic performance at current scenario but the other skills also may have indirect contribution to the academic performance i.e. via mediation or including some other intervening factors.

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However, the intercept value indicated a significant collective effect of all social skills on academic performance. This suggests that while individual social skills may vary in their impact, the overall development of social skills is crucial for academic performance (Baharin et al., 2018; Montroy et al., 2014).

Second objective of the study was to explore effect of demographic factors over academic performance of the secondary students. The study findings indicated no significant mean difference of academic performance on demographic variables i.e., gender and school sector. This finding is particularly interesting as it challenges the common assumption that demographic factors such as gender and school sector might play a significant role in academic performance (Marcenaro–Gutierrez et al., 2018; Sørli et al., 2021). Therefore, the study of other related factors as mediator or moderator may also be required such as individual differences, or study habits may also make crucial research on this topic.

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study found that the demographic variables of gender and school sector do not have a significant impact on the academic performance of the participants in the last exams. This finding underscores the importance of focusing on individual student needs and personalized learning approaches, rather than making assumptions based on demographic factors. Future research could further investigate what other influencing factors as well such as, individual learning styles, teaching methods, curriculum design, or socio-economic factors.

Another conclusion found in this study was, “among the various social skills, “collaboration” and “self-regulation” significantly influence academic performance”. However, the collective development of all social skills also plays a vital role in academic success. Therefore, the study underscores importance of fostering a comprehensive range of social skills in students with special emphasis on collaboration and self-regulation.

#### **Study limitations**

The study was made as best and honest effort in its available resources. However, a room of improvement or research gap is always left in all researches, the study limitations, which should be acknowledged – are described as follows:

- ∞ Including the qualitative aspect along with the quantitative research could give more depth and breadth to the topic.
- ∞ Longitudinal or developmental research could also highlight long-term impacts of social skills on academic performance and other life outcomes.
- ∞ Including the more demographic factors, could also make the picture clearer and more understandable.

#### **Recommendations**

The study recommendations are based on two facets i.e., for stakeholders as related to its research implications, and for the future researchers as related to the study limitations. Both of these group of recommendations, are described as under:

##### **Recommendations for Stakeholders**

For the educators, curriculum designers, parents and students themselves, it is imperative to understand the importance of collaboration and self-regulation on academic performance. Thus, focusing these aspects, can improve the learning outcomes. Especially, focusing the holistic development of social skills can also bring about magical improvement in academic performances.

For this purpose different initiatives can be taken at government level or by institutional policy makers. These initiatives may include conducting in-service or pre-service teacher training programs which may equip teachers with all necessary tools and strategies which may foster social skills, among students, particularly collaboration and self-regulation.

##### **Recommendations for Future Researchers**

For the future researchers it is imperative to fill-up the gaps and limitations left in this study such as conducting longitudinal or developmental studies; further prob into social skills by incorporating other skills and other research angels, and different contexts which may be left in this study.

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