

Social Skills in Learning Environments: A Comparative Analysis of Regular and Open Learning Higher Secondary Students

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Abstract: *Social skills are the abilities that help a person to successfully deal with and adjust to complex situations in their daily life. Social skills are needed to lead a happy and fulfilling social life. Through education, a person can acquire the essential competencies needed for a successful life. The study conducts a comparative analysis of the level of social skills among regular higher secondary students and open higher secondary students, collecting 250 samples from both groups, for 500 samples from Kozhikode district in Kerala. Additionally, the study examined the influence of gender on social skills. The study found that regular higher secondary students shows higher level of social skill than open higher secondary students do. Moreover, gender is a significant factor to influence the social skill. The study of social skills provides to understand students' abilities, capacities and attitudes. In the current scenario, the study gives valuable insights to parents, school administrators, educational professionals, researchers and individuals.*

Keywords: Regular students, Open students, Distance education, Social skill

INTRODUCTION

As a human being, a person's personality or behavior is a factor that clearly and explicitly influences their social existence. As a result, they are constantly exposed to social interactions. It may be with their primary relatives or with entirely unrelated people. As a social being, socialization is the process by which a person learns the norms and regulations of his community and evolves into a social individual (Ogburns and Nimkof, 1940). Similarly, socialization allows any individual's social interactions and processes to get going clearly and simply. The role of parents and teachers in the early socialization of a person going through such a stage is vital (Allen et al., 2021). Through the socialization process, a person able to understand how to connect and communicate with others. Development of social skills, particularly those related to peers, is an important capacity that forms the foundation for lifelong success and practical social skills are developed through intentional socialization (Barati et al., 2012).

According to Gandhiji, "The proper behaviour results from receiving the proper education and that education should not only aid in knowledge acquisition but also the development of character". Character education is important because it helps students develop skills that are essential for success in the future, such as empathy, integrity and responsibility (Gandhi, 1998). In the same way, education allows an individual to build elemental talents required for a successful life. The child coming out of school after his education should know himself and be able to make appropriate choices, make decisions, and maintain positive relationships with others. It also helps students become more successful academically and improves their social skills. (Cartledge and Milburn, 1980) highlights social skills are describes as interpersonal and table-related behaviours that produce positive consequences in the school classroom setting. Considering the social skill, it is goal-directed, well-organized behaviour obtained through practice and efficient execution. Social skill entails choosing and demonstrating behaviours at appropriate times and in specific contexts. Moreover, Social skills are essential for a fulfilling and thriving social life (Nasram Shyan et al., 2012).

SIGNIFICANCE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Children's physical and intellectual abilities make them the most productive members of society (Suman & Sarita, 2022). Nowadays, many students engage in antisocial activities, which lead to many social issues (Bhuvana et al., 2016). These kind of antisocial activities impair their mental and physical capacities, making them appear to burden society. (Bonvey and Strain, 2003) exhibits that using positive

skills with peers early can lead to positive peer relationships. Hart UP (1992) suggests that 'peer relationships make significant contributions to a person's social and cognitive development. Social skill development is crucial for current social scenario, many of our children lack the skills to handle social situations, and their inability to manage these interactions is the primary cause of their low self-confidence (Omidullah et al., 2020). Children often have trouble with social interactions (Jaswinder et al., 2007), and in some cases, specific impairments in nonverbal skills can be identified, such as a lack of expressive gestures, avoidance of eye contact, and signs of tension in their posture (Fiona Knott et al., 2006). Therefore, it is crucial to determine how well children can interact with others.

This study will help determine the areas where the kids need guidance and those where they are good. The current study was meant to evaluate the social skills among regular and open school students at the higher secondary level and assess the social skills among students on the regular and open stream. The study of social skills allows one better to comprehend student's capacity, competence and attitudes. As a result, this study is relevant in the present scenario and it benefits parents, school administrators, educational professionals, researchers and individuals.

METHODOLOGY

The quantitative approach and the survey method were used in the present study. This study was conducted on 500 higher secondary students from Kozhikode district in Kerala. 250 samples for regular school students were collected from higher secondary schools, whereas the 250 samples for open school students were collected from three centres where their contact classes were held. Considering the objectives of the current study, the following tools were developed and selected for the study: a general data sheet and a Social skill scale. A general data sheet was utilized to collect students' personal information. It includes the subject's data like name, type of school, class, sex and the social skill scale developed by Sood, Anand and Kumar (2012). It is standardized measure to assess social skills in both open and regular students at the higher secondary level. The statistical tests used in this study are mean, standard deviation and t-Test.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the distribution of 500 students, divided equally between Regular Schools and Open Schools. Each school type has 250 students, comprising 120 boys and 130 girls, highlighting an equal gender distribution across both types of schools.

Table 1: Distribution of Sample

Type of school	Boys	Girls	Total
Regular school	120	130	250
Open school	120	130	250

Table 2 illustrates the social skills scores of higher secondary students from regular and open schools. The mean score for students in regular schools was 107.9, equivalent to 71.9% of the maximum possible score of 150, with a standard deviation of 18.29. This indicates a satisfactory level of social skills among these students. On the other hand, open-school students had a mean score of 86.36, representing 57% of the maximum score, with a standard deviation of 16.59, reflecting an average level of social skills. The findings highlight significant differences in the development of social skills between students in regular and open

Table 2 Statistical measures of the extent of social skill of regular higher and open secondary school students

Type of school	Variable	Sample size	Maximum score	Statistical measures	
Regular school	Social skill	250	150	Mean	107.9
				Standard deviation	18.29
				Mean Percentage	71.9
Open school		250	150	Mean	86.35
				Standard deviation	16.59
				Mean Percentage	57.58

school settings at the higher secondary stage. Use high-resolution images for clarity and maintain consistency in design, color scheme, and labeling.

Table 3 Statistical measures of the influence of gender on social skills of regular higher secondary school students

Gender	Sample size	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	Level of significance
Girls	130	114.12	17.88	6.02	0.01 level
Boys	120	101.13	16.23		

*The table value at the 0.01 level was 2.58

Table 3 presents the mean social skills scores for girls and boys in regular schools at the higher secondary level. The mean score for girls was 114.12, with a standard deviation of 17.88; for boys, the mean score was 101.13, with a standard deviation of 16.23. The calculated t-value of 6.02 exceeded the table value of 2.58 at the 0.01 significance level, indicating a statistically significant difference in social skills between boys and girls. As a result, the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in social skills based on gender among regular school students at the higher secondary level is rejected, as demonstrated by the results in Table 3.

Table 4 Statistical measures of the influence of gender on social skills of open higher secondary school students

Gender	Sample size	Mean	Standard deviation	t-value	Level of significance
Girls	130	87.08	14.29	0.67	0.01 level
Boys	120	85.68	18.7		

*The table value at the 0.01 level was 2.58

Table 4 reveals that the mean social skill score for girls was 87.08, while for boys, it was 85.68, with standard deviations of 18.7 and 14.29, respectively. The calculated t-value of 0.67 was lower than the table value of 2.58 at the 0.01 significance level. These findings show that, in open school environments at the upper secondary level, there is no statistically significant difference in the social skill levels of boys and girls. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant gender-based difference in social skills for open-school students is rejected.

Table 5 Test of significance of the social skills of regular and open school students at higher secondary level

Sample	Sample size	Mean	Standard deviation	t value	Level of significance
Regular school students	250	107.88	18.29	14.28	0.01 level
Open school students	250	86.35	16.59		

Table 5 shows the mean social skills score for regular school students was 107.88, with a standard deviation of 18.29, while open school students had a mean score of 86.35 and a standard deviation of 16.59. There was a statistically significant difference in students' social skills from regular and open schools at the higher secondary level, as indicated by the estimated t-value of 14.28, which was greater than the critical table value. Compared to open-school students, regular school students appear to have superior social skills, as seen by their higher mean scores. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference in social skills between these two groups is rejected. Furthermore, this difference implies that school type influences the development of social skills at the higher secondary level.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Future directions for this research include increasing the sample size to enable more generalization of the results, or extending the study to more districts within the state. Additionally, the research could be replicated at various educational levels, including primary, secondary and college levels, to provide a more comprehensive understanding. Furthermore, the data collected in this investigation could be analyzed using alternative statistical techniques to provide new insights. Other components of social skills could also be explored in future studies to gain a deeper understanding of this complex construct. Ultimately, this research could extend to inform policymakers about the potential of open learning to provide high-quality education to many learners, thereby contributing to the development of effective educational policies.

CONCLUSION

Social skills are a collection of developmental qualities that contribute to the general level of social competence (Shaju et al., 2022). Many students lacked social skills, thus impacting their study and social life. Social skill components, such as interpersonal skills, social adjustment, and dealing with one's emotions, influence personality development (Supriatna et al., 2024). When students enhance their social skills, they can lead productive lives. The current study found that the regular students' social skills at the higher secondary level were above average, while open school students' social skills were below average. Moreover, gender influences the degree of social skills among both open and regular students at the higher secondary level.

According to the study, students in open schools at the higher secondary level are in a disadvantageous position comparing with regular students to acquiring social skills and thus require immediate attention. In contrast, their counterparts in regular schools are in a better position to acquire social skills for leading a better social life. This could be related to the fact that students in regular school have more opportunities for interaction with their peers and academic exposure. Students in open schools lacked many opportunities to learn with peer groups and academic environment. The current open school system does not emphasize curricular activities, a significant factor in students' declining socialization. The study highlights that students can develop social skills through various academic classroom activities such as soft skill training, seminars, debates, assignments, interactive sessions, open discussions, and live interactions with peers and teachers. This type of educational environment encourages both academic success and social well-being for students.

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