Social skills development of youth at higher level: the base for future stability

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Abstract
Research was focused to assess the level of social skills among the students; to draw difference on the basis of age, gender and level of education in social skill development and to suggest a model to improve social skills of the students. All the students enrolled in the universities of Islamabad in the year 201were the research population. The questionnaire based on 8 sub sections (Respectful to difference, Willingness to contribute, Prepared for future, Ready for change, Highly self expectant, Flexible, Appreciative, Pro active) was used to collect data. 194 students were selected as sample. Majority of the students were having below average level of social skills. Statistically no significant difference was found related to the social skills on the basis of age, gender and level of education. It was recommended that Cultural and national events celebration at educational institutes can also develop an understanding about other cultures and social skills. A model is also recommended in this regard.

1. Introduction

Social skills are defined as those traits which enable a person to interact with others in an effectual and desirable way. These are the abilities which help an individual in understanding others and making adjustments in diverse situations. "Social skills are the socially acceptable learned behaviors that enable a person to interact effectively with others and assist in avoiding socially unacceptable responses" (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). 'Social skills' is an umbrella term which includes many traits. Rashid (2010) defined social skills as interacting with others, problem solving, making decisions, being confident, handling one's own behavior and dealing effectively with others in a group.

Every society has some norms and social values which are anticipated to be followed by its members for the harmonious development of the society. Social skills consist of a set of behaviors that is desirable and acceptable by the society. Individuals with well-developed social skills are more likely to adjust in any social setting by following the rules established by the society. They are able to communicate effectively with others, respect the differences, help others and contribute to the community. These socially developed persons prove to be competent and prolific members of the society. On the contrary individuals with less developed social skills may confront isolation, rejection and maladjustment in social situations.

Social skills have the characteristic that they are learned through observation and imitation. According to Bandura (1977) individuals learn social behaviors by observing the behaviors of others and outcomes of their

behaviors. If the outcomes of the modeled behaviors are rewarded and appreciated, then these are learned and adopted by the individuals readily. On the other hand behaviors which result into negative consequences are usually avoided to rehearse.

Education is the prominent source of socialization. Primary purpose of education is to develop an individual into a proficient member of the society. Education inculcates the socially acceptable attitudes and traits in the individuals thus helping them in understanding their rights and responsibilities. Educational institutions are the formal places of social interactions. Children from the early years of schooling develop social skills by interaction with peers and teachers.

Social development remains continued during the academic years of individuals. In the later years of social and academic life, the span of potential social skills increases. Aim of the higher education is to enable the individuals not only to achieve self-satisfaction but also to make noteworthy contribution to the society. According to Mok and Tan (2004) it is the higher education that empowers the individuals to serve the society more efficiently. Thus the need was felt to assess and compare the social skills among the students of higher level education in Pakistan.

Research Objectives
1. To assess the level of social skills among the students at higher level.
2. To assess the difference in social skill development on the basis of age among students at higher level.
3. To assess the difference in social skill development on the basis of gender among students at higher level.
4. To assess the difference in social skill development on the basis of level of education among students at higher level.
5. To propose a model to improve social skills development among students.

Research Hypothesis
Ho 1   There is no difference in social skill development on the basis of age among students at higher level.
Ho 2   There is no difference in social skill development on the basis of gender among students at higher level.
Ho 3   There is no difference in social skill development on the basis of level of education among students at higher level.

Significance of the Study
The research in hand would be beneficial for the teachers primarily as it would indicate the impact of age, gender and level of education on the socialization of the students. Socialization is a major variable that effects the teaching learning situations. The well socialized and interactive environment of the class facilitates teachers as well as the students to share and discuss the learning concepts in more relaxed way. Thus the findings of this research will help the teachers to understand the process of learning social skills among the students so that the teaching situation may be mold and arranged according to that.

The study would help the policy makers and the curriculum planners to focus on the development of the social skills of the students as a compulsory part of the syllabus. As it is observed that the young generation needs emotional stability and training for the life skills. Thus the findings of this research would help them to explore the ways to incorporate the social skills with the curriculum content.

The research would also guide the students and the parents as it would suggest the ways and measures to improve the social skills that are an important factor in learning adjustment in the society in long run.

2.   Literature Review

In a study conducted by Zsolnai and Kasik (2014), it was found that social skills have a positive impact on academic achievements of students. Students who have developed more social skills get better grades as compared to their peers with less social competence. Socially developed students easily adjust in school environment. Moreover the study revealed that there was no significant difference in social skills of older and younger students of middle level. Comedis (2014) argued that social skills can be a great facilitator in achieving academic success at school. Students with enhanced social skills can solve their school related problems more readily by asking questioning and listening attentively.

Beheshtifar and Norozy (2013) in a study conducted in Iran explored the social skills as an important factor for success at workplace. Social skills assist the individuals in getting along with each other and making adjustment in any working environment. Persons with high social skills can express themselves effectively thus strengthening the mutual relationships with others. This in turn results into enhanced job performances. New and Ghafar (2012) in their study in Malaysia explored the role of higher education in developing social skills in college students. In a qualitative study they found out that higher education

converts individuals into competent members of the society by developing certain social skills in them. These skills facilitate individuals in adjusting in any social and professional culturally miscellaneous environment.

Deil-Amen (2006) identified that private professional colleges in US, focus more on developing work related social skills in their students as compared to public colleges. Thus private colleges are producing more socially competent individuals who are able to get better job opportunities by teaching those skills which are valued in the labor market. On the contrary community colleges are not paying the much needed attention on teaching professional social skills.

Samanci (2010) studied some important factors which can affect the development of the required social skills in children. These are family background, schooling, social environment and individualistic personality traits. Children who receive attention and care at home, student-centered teaching methodologies at school and group interaction with friends, are more sociable. Carneiro, Crawford and Goodman (2007) analyzed that social skills are vital for school success, professional outcomes and social conduct at different life stages. Furthermore their study identified that both cognitive and social skills depend on family environment but social skills are more pliable as compared to cognitive skills. Moreover education can be a great source of development and improvement of social skills.

3. Methodology

The researcher designed the research keeping in view the importance of social skills in the life of the youth as a source of development for the future. The research was dependant on quantitative analysis in order to draw the findings. The researcher adopted the survey based research design. The research was based on a comparative analysis of the social skills among the students at higher level. The comparison was based on the basis of age variation, gender and level of education. The researcher also planned to suggest some comprehensive model to develop and train the youth related to the basic social skills that are needed to survive in this world.

The population of the research was based on the all enrolled students in the universities of Islamabad in the year 2017. The records revealed that there are in total 17 universities in Islamabad recognized by higher education commission. In which 13 were from public and 4 were from private sector. Convenient sampling technique was used in order to select the sample. 194 students contributed as the sample of the research. The data was collected with the help of the questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire was divided into 8 sub sections related to the eight sub variables of the social skills. These variables were as follows.

I. Respectful to differences
II. Willingness to contribute
III. Prepared for future
IV. Ready for change
V. Highly self expectant
VI. Flexible
VII. Appreciative
VIII. Pro active

The questionnaire was based on 42 items related to 8 major areas of social skills to be assessed in the students. The data was collected by the personal visit of the researchers. The collected data was tabulated with the help of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) 21 edition.

Tables

Table No. 1: *Reliability Analysis*

Scale	Items	Cronbach's Reliability	Alpha
Social Skills	42	.87	

The Table No. 1 reliability analysis showed that the scale was found reliable. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the scale was 0.87. That shows the excellent level of reliability of the research scale.

Table No. 2: *Item Total Correlations*

Items	R	Items	r	Items	r
S1	.47	S15	.65	S29	.43
S2	.32	S16	.29	S30	.55
S3	.46	S17	.44	S31	.29
S4	.12	S18	.46	S32	.58
S5	.36	S19	.24	S33	.62
S6	.34	S20	.48	S34	.49
S7	.45	S21	.44	S35	.13
S8	.21	S22	.40	S36	.47
S9	.21	S23	.54	S37	.52
S10	.43	S24	.40	S38	.40
S11	.36	S25	.48	S39	.42
S12	.39	S26	.41	S40	.27
S13	.49	S27	.44	S41	.26
S14	.40	S28	.37	S42	.48

The Table No. 2 shows the correlation between the items of the social skill assessment scale. The table explains that the correlation between all the items was fair enough. The highest correlation was of the item S15 (.65).

Table No. 3: *Social Skills Level Score*

	Social Skills	Score Range	Frequencies	Percentage
1	Poor	1-40	Nil	-
2	Below Average	41-80	120	61.85
3	Average	81-120	56	28.86
4	Good	121-160	17	8.76
5	Excellent	161-200	01	0.51

The Table No. 3 explain that majority (61.85 %) of the respondent had below average level of social skills and 28.76 percent of the respondents had average level of social skills.

Table No. 4: *Comparison of Social Skill Development on the basis of Age (ANOVA)*

Variable	Age	N	Mean	F	df	Sig.
Social Skills	20-25	176	146.90	.09	191	.91
	26-30	14	149.14			
	31-35	4	145.00			
	Total	194	147.03			
Respectful to differences	20-25	176	17.45	1.08	191	.33
	26-30	14	16.14			
	31-35	4	16.25			
	Total	194	17.33			
Willingness to contribute	20-25	176	21.65	.25	191	.77
	26-30	14	22.00			
	31-35	4	20.50			
	Total	194	21.65			
Prepared for future	20-25	176	17.26	.01	191	.98
	26-30	14	17.14			
	31-35	4	17.00			
	Total	194	17.25			
Ready for change	20-25	176	17.38	1.78	191	.17
	26-30	14	19.07			
	31-35	4	16.75			
	Total	194	17.49			
Self-expectant	20-25	176	17.38	.18	191	.83
	26-30	14	17.21			
	31-35	4	16.25			
	Total	194	17.34			

Flexible	20-25	176	16.99	.36	191	.69
	26-30	14	17.86			
	31-35	4	16.50			
	Total	194	17.04			
Appreciative	20-25	176	18.60	1.27	191	.28
	26-30	14	19.50			
	31-35	4	21.25			
	Total	194	18.72			
Pro active	20-25	176	20.19	.01	191	.98
	26-30	14	20.21			
	31-35	4	20.50			
	Total	194	20.20			

*p <0.05, **p <0.01

The above Table No. 4 shows that there was no statistical significant difference found between different age groups related to the "respectful to differences, willingness to contribute, prepared for future, ready for change, highly self expectant, flexibility, appreciativeness and pro active behavior".

Thus the hypothesis "There is no difference in social skill development on the basis of age among students at higher level" is approved.

Table No. 5: *Comparison of Social Skill Development on the basis of Gender (t Test)*

Variable		N	Mean	t value	df	Sig.
Social Skills	Female	107	148.40	1.02	192	.30
	Male	87	145.33			
Respectful to differences	Female	107	17.52	.85	192	.39
	Male	87	17.09			
Willingness to contribute	Female	107	22.05	1.65	192	.09
	Male	87	21.17			
Prepared for future	Female	107	16.99	-1.08	192	.27
	Male	87	17.56			
Ready for change	Female	107	17.61	.54	192	.58
	Male	87	17.34			
Self expectant	Female	107	17.21	-.55	192	.57
	Male	87	17.51			
Flexible	Female	107	17.16	.47	192	.63
	Male	87	16.90			
Appreciative	Female	107	19.35	2.57	192	.01
	Male	87	17.95			
Pro active	Female	107	20.52	1.23	192	.22
	Male	87	19.80			

*p <0.05, **p <0.01

The above table shows the t statistics to describe the difference of social skills between the male and female students. The data revealed that overall there was no significant difference between male and female students' social skills. While going in the detailed analysis it was revealed that no statistical significant difference was found related to "respectful to differences, willingness to contribute, prepared for future, ready for change, highly self expectant, flexibility and pro active behavior". However there was a significant difference related to the Appreciativeness. Female students were found better male students.

Thus the hypothesis "There is no difference in social skill development on the basis of gender among students at higher level" is approved.

Table No. 6: *Comparison of Social Skill Development on the basis of Level of Education (ANOVA)*

Variable	Level of Education	N	Mean	F	df	Sig
Social Skills	BA	97	146.90	2.24	190	.08
	MA	89	145.75			
	M PHIL	7	166.29			
	Ph D	1	138.00			
	Total	194	147.03			
Respectful to differences	BA	97	17.42	.09	190	.96
	MA	89	17.20			
	M PHIL	7	17.71			
	Ph D	1	17.00			
	Total	194	17.33			
Willingness to contribute	BA	97	21.54	.34	190	.79
	MA	89	21.67			
	M PHIL	7	23.00			
	Ph D	1	22.00			
	Total	194	21.65			
Prepared for future	BA	97	17.23	.68	190	.56
	MA	89	17.16			
	M PHIL	7	19.00			
	Ph D	1	15.00			
	Total	194	17.25			
Ready for change	BA	97	17.45	2.52	190	.05
	MA	89	17.30			
	M PHIL	7	20.71			
	Ph D	1	15.00			
	Total	194	17.49			
Self expectant	BA	97	17.46	1.44	190	.23
	MA	89	17.03			
	M PHIL	7	19.86			
	Ph D	1	15.00			
	Total	194	17.34			
Flexibility	BA	97	16.71	2.05	190	.10
	MA	89	17.17			
	M PHIL	7	20.29			
	Ph D	1	15.00			
	Total	194	17.04			
Appreciative	BA	97	18.81	3.28	190	.02
	MA	89	18.29			
	M PHIL	7	22.86			
	Ph D	1	19.00			
	Total	194	18.72			
Pro active	BA	97	20.27	1.15	190	.32
	MA	89	19.92			
	M PHIL	7	22.86			
	Ph D	1	20.00			
	Total	194	20.20			

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$

The above table indicates that there was no significant difference found between the respondents having different qualification/ level of education related to the social skills.

However related to the subscales there was no significant difference related to "respectful to differences, willingness to contribute, prepared for future, highly self expectant, flexibility and pro active behavior".

However, Significant difference found between appreciativeness and readiness for change (*$p < 0.05$). the students of M.Phil level of education were found more good in appreciativeness and readiness for change.

The hypothesis "There is no difference in social skill development on the basis of level of education among students at higher level" is approved.

4. Discussion

The research as primarily designed to assess the social skills among the students at higher level. Higher level of education is considered as the most important stage of education in any country. This is the most refined and the last stage that produces the highest level of skilled manpower. The manpower that is responsible to shape the future of the country. So it is important that the graduates who will represent the nation at international forums must have social skills to develop good interpersonal relations.
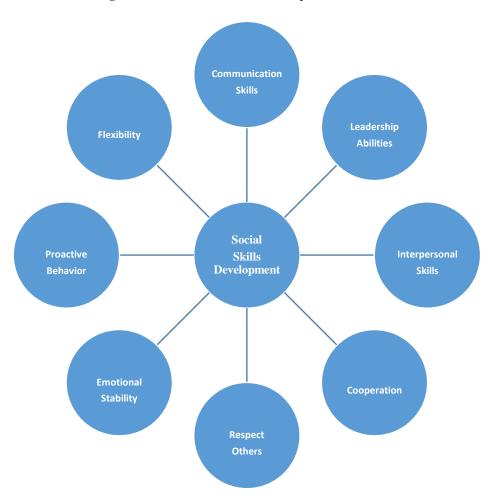
Accrding to Mok and Tan (2004) Social skills are the basic skills that are required to live with the people in a society. Even now days when the world is becoming a global village and the people and the countries are coming closer to each other day by day it becomes more important (Parvis, 2003). With the advancement of technology we have to deal with the people who belong from different races, cultures, languages, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Rashid (2010) said that to live with the people who may have difference with us we need the basic social skills to deal with each other comfortably.

The objectives of the research were "To assess the level of social skills among the students at higher level; to assess the difference in social skill development on the basis of age among students at higher level; to assess the difference in social skill development on the basis of gender among students at higher level; to assess the difference in social skill development on the basis of level of education among students at higher level and to propose a model to improve social skills development among students". Majority of the students were having below average level of social skills. It was also revealed from the data that no statically significant difference was found in social skills on the basis of gender, age and level of education. Thus it is found that there is a need to develop social skills among students. No matter what age group and gender they belong. Keeping in view the need a model was also developed for the social skills development.

5. Recommendations

1. It is recommended to develop the social skills the educational organizations may organize the event in which the students may collectively participate. This team work will train the students to deal with each other and to understand other members of the group.
2. Group activities may be the compulsory part of the curricular activities to develop a collaborative environment.
3. Cultural and national events celebration at educational institutes can also develop an understanding about other cultures and the people around us.
4. Regular session may be held weekly at classroom level to develop good communication skills among the students.
5. Social projects that can be based on the social issues may be assigned to the students in group form to be discussed resolved. Social welfare programmes can bring the people united in order to bring something productive.
6. Basic daily life skills such as problem solving, communication, decision making etc may be the compulsory part of curriculum at all levels.
7. Basic life skills may be added as a core subject in the curriculum from the basic level of education. The focus must be on practical application.
8. In addition the following model has been suggested to be applied at all educational levels. The model has sub area that need to be developed in the students in order to develop a strong nation for the future.

Fig No. 1 Student Social Skill Development Elements Model

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