

A study on Social Skills among Higher Education Teachers

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ABSTRACT

India's rapidly changing higher education system with holistic development on teachers to possess both strong competences and subject-matter expertise. Globalization, digitalization, diverse classrooms, and learner-centered pedagogies have increased the demand on teachers to be empathetic, collaborative, and capable of handling conflict in a positive way. This study looks at how important social skills are for teachers in higher education and how they affect student involvement, classroom efficacy, and institutional quality. The study emphasizes the use of skills like active listening, flexibility, cooperation, and constructive criticism in creating welcoming, encouraging, and stimulating learning environments through an extensive analysis of Indian and international literature from the existing research. Results show that instructors with strong social skills have more professional satisfaction, resilience, and adaptability in addition to improving student results and holistic development. In line with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the study emphasizes the strategic significance of including social skill development into teacher training and professional development programs in India. All things considered, social skills are essential for producing graduates who are emotionally intelligent, socially conscious, and competitive in the global economy, as well as for enhancing the efficiency and long-term viability of higher education institutions and Teachers.

Keywords: Higher Education, Digitalization, Social Skills, National Education Policy 2020

INTRODUCTION

It appears that developing nations like India urgently need to improve the social skills of their teachers. In reaction to globalization, privatization, and technological improvement, the Indian higher education system is currently undergoing both rapid growth and a significant transition. Teachers now work in extremely varied, complicated, and demanding academic situations, which presents a number of obstacles in addition to opportunities. In this situation, a teacher's capacity for effective connection, communication, and teamwork becomes equally important as their subject-matter expertise. This highlights how vital social skills are for instructors in higher education. Higher education has always had a role beyond just spreading knowledge. Colleges and universities serve as a public face for ideas and are the archives of culture, knowledge, and values. In addition to facilitating learning, teachers in these institutions serve as mentors, advisors, and role models who have an impact on students' personal and professional development. The learning environment and the interactions between teachers and students are greatly influenced by social skills like empathy, cooperation, conflict resolution, cooperation, flexibility, and effective communication. Without these abilities, higher education runs the risk of becoming into a transactional process rather than a transformative one, turning instruction into the dissemination of knowledge rather than a meaningful human exchange.

The demand for social skills has grown significantly in the current century. There are several causes for this. First, the atmosphere in the classroom has evolved. Teachers need to be patient, culturally sensitive, and have good interpersonal skills because of rising class sizes, multilingual cohorts, online and blended learning, and students from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. Second, employability skills are now given priority in the job market; studies constantly show that graduates need to be able to work in a team, communicate well, and adapt. Higher education now strategically needs professors to demonstrate and transfer these talents since they serve as mentors and role models. Third, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's focus on 21st

century skills and holistic development highlights how important it is for educators to have strong social skills so they can foster comparable qualities in their pupils.

The relevance of social skills is further highlighted by the paradigm shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred approaches. According to traditional methods, knowledge flowed naturally and the instructor was the only authority. But because modern pedagogy is collaborative and participatory, teachers must take on the role of facilitators who listen, promote discussion, establish rapport, and create a positive learning environment. Effective teaching and learning strategies now include the use of abilities including empathy, active listening, conflict resolution, and constructive criticism. Both teachers' and students' mental health and wellness are linked to the necessity of social skills. rising education classrooms are experiencing rising levels of anxiety, disengagement, and burnout due to the mounting stress of academic rivalry, job uncertainty, and post-pandemic issues. Teachers' social skills operate as buffers in these situations, creating a supportive emotional environment that boosts students' drive and resilience. More socially competent teachers are better able to read their pupils' emotional signs, offer support, and build the trust necessary for meaningful participation.

Teachers themselves also gain from having good social skills. They have better flexibility to institutional adjustments, more collegial connections, and greater job satisfaction. Teachers that possess social skills are frequently better able to handle difficulties in the classroom, uphold sound boundaries, and preserve a feeling of efficacy and professional identity. To put it another way, social skills are crucial for instructors' personal development, well-being, and long-term employment in addition to being tools for students' improvement. There are still holes in the Indian higher education system, notwithstanding their importance. Programs for professional development frequently place a greater emphasis on subject competence. Compared to the wealth of research on school teachers, there is currently a dearth of studies on ICT skills or teacher social skills in India. Studies that do exist typically focus on leadership or communication in limited terms without thoroughly outlining the wide variety of social skills needed in the modern academic setting. Higher education runs the risk of not meeting NEP 2020's goal of turning out graduates who are employable, socially conscious, and globally competitive if faculty social capabilities are not systematically invested in.

The requirement for social skills is made even more urgent by the evolving nature of education in India, which is characterized by multicultural classrooms, digitalization, and international rivalry. Social competences are changing the human element of teaching, much like digital technology changed the educational system. Social skills help instructors manage relationships if ICT and digital skills help them manage information. Both are necessary to create an institution that is inclusive, efficient, and prepared for the future. Lifelong learning also revolves around social skills including communication, empathy, teamwork, and flexibility. Teachers that exhibit these abilities help their pupils develop curiosity, teamwork, and self-assurance, which in turn helps them become independent learners. Students gain skills that are essential in today's competitive and linked world, such as appreciating diversity, handling conflict in a positive way, and working well in teams. Therefore, by specifically addressing the requirement for social skills in Indian higher education, the current study fills a crucial gap. It examines how these abilities support good instruction, student performance, and institutional quality while pointing out the obstacles and opportunities for improvement. By doing this, it responds to global trends, connects with national agendas, and offers evidence for reconsidering professional development tactics in higher education.

Problem Statement

Even though social skills are widely recognized as being important for both teaching and learning, not much is known about how these abilities affect the efficiency of instruction in Indian higher education. Very few research examines the whole range of socio-emotional competences necessary for teachers in higher education; the majority of studies concentrate on school-level educators, communication styles, or leadership characteristics. Research on how social skills affect teacher effectiveness, student engagement, and institutional quality is lacking due to a lack of conceptual clarity and empirical frameworks. It becomes crucial to look at how social skills support efficient pedagogy and quality improvement in higher education in light of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which places an emphasis on the socioemotional development and holistic teacher development. In order to close this gap, the current study aims to investigate, integrate, and comprehend the connection between institutional growth, instructional efficacy, and social skills of teachers.

Objectives

1. To investigate the significance of social skills have in improving the efficacy of higher education instructors.
2. To identify important areas need for further study and offer a theoretical framework that connects social skills to both institutional quality and teacher performance.
3. To align results with the objectives of NEP 2020, which prioritize holistic and socioemotional teacher development.

Research Question

How do social skills contribute to enhancing teaching effectiveness among higher education teachers?

METHODOLOGY

The current study uses a conceptual review design and incorporates data from secondary sources. The keywords "social skills," "teacher effectiveness," "higher education," "communication," and "empathy" were used to conduct a systematic search of academic databases like Google Scholar and Scopus. The review included conceptual articles, empirical research, and policy papers that addressed teachers, social-emotional competencies, self-efficacy, communication, and interpersonal relationships. The process involved screening abstracts, evaluating methodological rigor, and classifying findings under thematic headings like conceptualization of social skills, their relationship with teaching outcomes, etc. This structured and transparent approach strengthens the analytical synthesis and provides a reliable basis for conceptual discussion.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Scheirlinckx et al (2023) emphasized the importance of social emotional skills (SEMS) for teachers and proposed a conceptual model to categorize them. The study highlighted the gap in research on teacher SEMS, called for empirical validation and assessment tools, and stresses their significance for teacher development and social emotional learning policy.

Gul et al (2023) surveyed 100 undergraduate students in Quetta, Pakistan, to explore the link between social skills and academic competences. Results showed no semester wise differences but revealed a positive correlation between social skills and academic performance, highlighting the need for institutions to promote social skill development through structured programs and activities.

Busnawir (2023) conducted an ex post facto study with 49 senior higher school students in southern Konawe to examine links between social skills, digital literacy, and mathematical literacy. Using SEM analysis, the study found social skills positively influenced digital literacy but not mathematical literacy, while digital literacy significantly enhanced mathematical literacy. Students showed strengths in peer relation and information searching but weaknesses in academic compliance and knowledge synthesis.

Shagufta (2022) presented a conceptual study on the role of communication and presentation skills in teaching. The paper emphasized verbal, non-verbal, visual, and written communication as essential for effective teaching, highlighting that mastering these skills is vital for success in both formal and informal educational context

Laksmiwati et al (2022) studied 78 second year to examine the link between social skills and self-efficacy using a Likert-scale survey and correlation analysis. Result showed a positive relationship, indicating that stronger social skills contribute to higher self-efficacy among student.

Virtanen & Tyniala (2021) examined pedagogical practices predicting social skill learning among 123 finish University students. Using questionnaires and regression analysis, they found collaborative and active leaning methods strongly enhanced social skills, while passive, teachers-centered approaches had negative effect, highlighting the value of interactive pedagogy in higher education.

Dhillon & Kaur (2021) explored the effect of teachers communication styles on communication effectiveness among 210 higher education faculty in northern India using surveys and statistical analysis. Results showed communication style had a significant impact on effectiveness, with gender differences in listening and message delivery, but no variation by subject. The study underscores the need for teachers to be aware of their communication styles to improve teaching outcomes.

Karthikeyan et al. (2020) conducted a normative survey among 300 prospective teachers in Thiruvananthapuram using an online interpersonal skills test. Result showed most had moderate competence, with significant difference across demographic, highlighting the need to strengthen interpersonal skills in teacher education for todays complex, technology driven world.

Gupta & Gupta (2020) examined principle-teacher interactions and teachers attitudes towards the profession among 150 teachers (PRT, TGT, PGT) from private schools in Jammu. Using the Principal Interaction Questionnaire, the study found principals were largely viewed as supportive and encouraging, and teachers generally had positive attitudes, emphasizing the importance of strong principal teacher relationships for a positive school environment.

Begum et al. (2020) conducted a descriptive study in ESL classroom in Telangana, India, with 60 second-year engineering students using the jigsaw strategy under collaborative learning. The purposive sample was divided into 12 groups, guided by two faculty members. Findings showed that collaborative learning improved communication, problem solving, students engagement, self-awareness, and higher-order thinking.

Meleki et al. (2019) investigated social skills among 546 preschool children in Rasht, Iran, using the SSRS-T and demographic data. Findings showed children had moderate levels of cooperation, assertion, and self-control, with social skills significantly linked to factors such as maternal education, employment, family income, teacher experience, and class size.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study provides a conceptual model explaining how social skills work as mediating elements between individual teacher competence and institutional outcomes.

Core Social Skills: Empathy, communication, flexibility, teamwork, and conflict management



Improved teacher-student connection, a supportive classroom environment, collaborative learning, and teacher well-being are examples of intermediate effects.



Results: Increased efficacy in instruction, better student involvement, and improved institutional quality

This concept emphasizes how teachers' socioemotional skills interact dynamically with institutional settings and educational methods rather than functioning in an isolation. It embodies the NEP 2020 vision that, in order to achieve long-term educational transformation, teacher development must incorporate cognitive, emotional, and ethical growth.

Interpretation

In today's changing academic environment, social skills are essential qualities that influence higher education instructors' efficacy. Effective teaching is increasingly seen to depend on the teacher's capacity for communication, empathy, teamwork, and conflict resolution in addition to topic knowledge and technological competence. Building trust, cultivating a positive teacher-student connection, and establishing an inclusive learning atmosphere where students feel appreciated and inspired are all made possible by social skills. In this way, social competence serves as the cornerstone for mentorships, information sharing, and all-around development. Today's higher education is characterized by huge class numbers, blended or digital learning modalities, different cohorts, and diverse classrooms. Teachers' flexibility, attentive listening, classroom management, and collaborative student engagement become essential in such a situation. For example, although

abilities like conflict resolution and constructive criticism improve classroom unity, empathy aids teachers in understanding the emotional and academic difficulties of their pupils. In addition to improving learning outcomes, these competences make sure that instruction transcends the mere dissemination of knowledge and becomes a meaningful human exchange.

According to national initiatives like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, social skills among educators are strongly related to the focus on students' well-being, 21st century skills, and holistic education. Teachers prepare students to succeed in both the professional and social worlds by modelling cooperation, flexibility, and teamwork. Social skills allow instructors to manage human interactions, which is an equally important aspect of education in the twenty-first century, just as digital skills help them handle technical progress. Strong social skills are also very beneficial to teachers themselves. Collegiality is fostered, workplace stress is decreased, and professional happiness is increased through effective communication and collaboration. Teachers with social skills are more resilient to academic constraints, maintain a strong professional identity, and adjust to institutional adjustments more easily. Because social skills have an impact on both teachers and pupils, they are crucial to both the quality of institutions and the efficacy of instruction. According to the interpretation of earlier research, social skills are still underappreciated and understudied in higher education, even if professional development frequently places an emphasis on content knowledge, ICT, or research productivity. However, research continuously demonstrates that skills like empathy, communication, and teamwork positively improve student engagement, instructional efficacy, and overall institutional performance. Consequently, it is strategic rather than optional to invest in the social skills development of higher education instructors. It is a way to make sure that higher education fulfils its mission of creating citizens who are not only knowledgeable but also emotionally intelligent, socially conscious, and competitive on a global scale.

FINDINGS

In addition to topic knowledge, effective teaching in higher education increasingly involves good social skills. Instructors that possess high levels of empathy, communication, flexibility, and teamwork are more equipped to establish a welcoming, encouraging, and stimulating learning environment. Socially adept teachers are able to lead a diverse classroom, foster trust with pupils, encourage collaboration, and settle disputes amicably. Students' interest, involvement, and overall development are all enhanced by the development of social skills. Teachers that exhibit good interpersonal skills model similar actions in their students, which promotes teamwork, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence. Additionally, socially adept teachers report better working relationships, less stress, and higher job satisfaction, which helps them adjust to institutional changes and continue to be successful teachers. In general, social skills are essential for improving interactions between teachers and students, creating a supportive learning environment, and guaranteeing that universities generate graduates who are not just intellectually strong but also emotionally and socially conscious.

Limitation and Further Direction

The conceptual aspect of this paper is supported by secondary data from previous studies. Primary data gathering and statistical validation are not included. To test the suggested conceptual framework, future studies may use empirical designs including surveys, interviews, and classroom observations. The relationship between social skills, teaching efficacy, and institutional growth would be better understood through comparative studies across gender, discipline, and institutional kinds.

CONCLUSION

Social skills are crucial and supplemental competencies for teachers in the current higher education environment. Strong socioemotional and interpersonal abilities help teachers engage with students, support group projects, handle difficult situations in the classroom, and mentor students outside of the classroom. Teachers establish supportive learning environments that improve academic results and student engagement by encouraging empathy, communication, teamwork, and flexibility. Through focused professional development programs, mentoring, and cooperative effort, institutions can assist teachers in developing their social skills. In addition to improving student results, socially competent instructors report higher levels of resilience, adaptability, and professional h

appiness. Thus, enhancing the social skills of college instructors improves their ability to teach, fosters the holistic development of their students, and raises the standard and competitiveness of higher education as a whole.

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