



Cover Page



A study on the Social Competence among Student Teachers

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Abstract

Competence is a multi-dimensional aspect involving cognitive, functional, personal aspects, and social components. While analysing the teachers' competency, it is seen as the outcome of complex skills demonstrated by teachers; not only what they know but also how they apply it responsibly and effectively in diverse situations. In specific, social competence of teachers is considered as the key to effective teaching-learning process. To assess the social competence of student teachers, a tool was constructed by the investigator and administered to 260 student teachers from two B.Ed colleges in Coimbatore District. The statistical analysis revealed that the student teachers had a moderate level of social competence and differed significantly based on year of study and age group. The second-year B.Ed. students had better social competence than the first-year students. The student teachers in less than 30 age group have better social competence than the student teachers in more than 30 age group. Based on the findings, discussion and educational implications are given.

Keywords: student teachers, social competence, communication, collaboration, professional ethics

Introduction

Individuals need a combination of skills like communication, problem-solving, collaboration, and adaptability, along with technical and numeracy skills, to succeed in professional life. The term skill could be referred as “the ability to do something well” and “a vital competency that is needed to perform a task”. Developing these diverse abilities or competencies helps individuals in various aspects of life, including career advancement and navigating social situations. According to the Cambridge Assessment (2020), some one who is competent can perform successfully in the domain in which the person has developed competence (e.g., mathematics, carpentry). Competence refers to the ability of an individual to effectively apply knowledge, skills, attitudes, and personal qualities to perform tasks or roles successfully in a given context. Therefore, developing competence is an invaluable asset not just for the individuals themselves but also for workplaces and life settings, and in turn benefiting the economy and society more widely.

Conceptual understanding of Social Competence among Student Teachers

While gaining an in-depth understanding of the term competence, “It is the ability to integrate and apply contextually-appropriate knowledge, skills and psychosocial factors (e.g.,



Cover Page



beliefs, attitudes, values and motivations) to consistently perform successfully within a specified domain.”(CambridgeAssessment, 2020, para.3).It goes beyond simply possessing theoretical knowledge; competence reflects how well a person can integrate and use that knowledge in real-life situations. Thus, competence is multi-dimensional, Involving cognitive aspects (understanding and problem-solving), functional aspects (practical skills and performance), personal aspects (values, responsibility, self-regulation), and social aspects (communication, collaboration, ethical behaviour).Thorough analysis of competency, reveals that it is an outcome of complex skills demonstrated by teachers; not only what they know but also how they apply it responsibly and effectively in diverse situations. It provides a holistic measure of readiness for both personal growth and professional practice. Specifically, social competence of teachers is considered the key to effective teaching-learning process.

Need and Significance of the Study

The teaching profession demands not only subject knowledge and pedagogical skills but al so strong social competence, as teachers constantly interact with students,peers,parents, and the wider community. Social competence enables teachers to communicate effectively, manage classroom dynamics, build positive relationships, and respond sensitively to the diverse needs of learners. For student teachers, developing these competencies during their training period is crucial for their professional growth and successful transition into real classroom environments. Understanding the level of social competence among student teachers helps teacher educators identify areas that require focused intervention and training. Moreover, assessing differences based on demographic or academic factors provides insights into how social and experiential variables shape interpersonal effectiveness. Thus, the study on social competence among student teachers is significant as it contributes to improving teacher education programmes, enhancing the overall quality of teaching-learning processes, and preparing socially adept, empathetic, and ethically responsible future educators.

Statement of the Problem

Students pursuing professional courses such as the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) must possess diverse skills including cognitive, functional, personal aspects, and social components. Ainy and Pratama, (2020) found that there was a positive and significant correlation between teacher social competence and student learning outcomes. Thus, the teachers as well as the prospective teachers should concentrate to enhance their social skills in order to achieve better teaching-learning process. According to Kubova-Semaka, (2020), competence is difficult to analyze a sits ‘component sex habit synergies between each other during the activities and tasks performed. However, Odak,I.,Marušić,I.,andetal.(2023)



Cover Page



insisted that teachers need support for the development of social and emotional competencies, we need to support via a comprehensive school-wide approach to ensure its successful implementation in classrooms. However, before initiating such a comprehensive proposal, an in-depth understanding of the social competence and its sub-components that play a vital role in the teaching-learning process needs to be assessed. Thus, a search was planned to identify the social competence of student teachers, and the factors influencing them. As an initial measure, the “study on social competence among student teachers” was carried out, and the findings are discussed.

Objectives of the study

- i. To analyze the level of social competence among the student teachers.
- ii. To compare the social competence of student teachers based on demographic variables.

Operational Definitions of the Key Terms

- **Social Competence:** It is the social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral skills needed for successful social adaptation and to interact effectively with others in diverse social situations.

- **Student Teacher:** It refers to the student who gets admitted in B.Ed. programme and undergoes training and related activities to become a professional teacher.

Year of Study: Presently, the duration of B.Ed. programme is of two years. The student teachers were categorized as first-year and second-year of their study in B.Ed. programmes.

Age Group: For the present study, the student teachers are categorized into two groups namely, less than 30, and more than 30 years of age.

Research Methodology: The current study is a normative Survey. The details of population and sample, sampling technique, tool used, and statistics used are as given below.

Population and Sample: Population refers to the student teachers studying in B.Ed. Colleges in Coimbatore. The data was collected from 260 sample studying in two colleges.

Tool: The researcher developed the social competence scale for the student teachers (SCSST) which had 44 items under seven dimensions. The reliability of the tool was calculated using Cronbach alpha and it was 0.81.

Statistical Technique: Descriptive analysis and t-test were used in this study.



Delimitation of the Study: The investigator carried out the survey in two B.Ed colleges in Coimbatore District due to time constraints.

Analyses and Interpretation of the Data

Table1

Descriptive analysis on social competence of the sample

S. No	Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
1	Social Competence	260	84	199	143.07	20.4
2	Communication Skill	260	7	33	22.6	4.7
3	Interpersonal Skill	260	7	35	22.1	5.0
4	Conflict Resolution & Problem-Solving	260	6	30	19.8	4.2
5	Adaptability & Flexibility	260	6	30	19.4	4.7
6	Emotional Regulation & Self-Control	260	10	35	23.4	4.6
7	Collaboration & Teamwork	260	9	30	19.7	4.0
8	Professional Ethics	260	5	25	16.1	3.6

In the table 1, a detailed description of the mean, standard deviation, maximum and minimum scores of the sample with respect to social competence is given. The mean score of the sample (143.07) showed that the student teachers had a moderate level of social competence. Likewise, all the dimension of social competence namely communication skill (22.6), interpersonal skill (22.1), conflict resolution & problem-solving (19.8), adaptability & flexibility (19.4), emotional regulation & self-control (23.4), collaboration & team work (19.7), and professional ethics (16.1) are showing moderate levels.

Hypothesis1: There is no significant difference in the social competence and its dimensions i) Communication Skill, ii) Interpersonal Skill, iii) Conflict Resolution & Problem-Solving, iv) Adaptability & Flexibility, v) Emotional Regulation & Self-Control, vi) Collaboration & Team work, and vii) Professional Ethics between the student teachers based on their year of study in B.Ed.



Cover Page



Table2

Social Competence of Student Teachers based on the year of study

S. no	Variable	Year of Study	N	Mean	S.D	Df	't' value	p value
1	Social Competence	First	160	140.9	19.6	258	2.14	0.33
		Second	100	146.5	21.2			
i)	Communication Skill	First	160	22.2	4.5	258	2.09	0.37
		Second	100	23.4	4.9			
ii)	Interpersonal Skill	First	160	21.8	4.8	258	1.51	0.13
		Second	100	22.7	5.3			
iii)	Conflict Resolution & Problem-Solving	First	160	19.9	4.2	258	0.95	0.34
		Second	100	19.5	4.2			
iv)	Adaptability & Flexibility	First	160	18.7	4.5	258	3.08	0.002
		Second	100	20.5	4.7			
v)	Emotional Regulation & Self-Control	First	160	23.0	4.4	258	0.88	0.38
		Second	100	23.7	4.8			
vi)	Collaboration & Teamwork	First	160	19.4	4.1	258	1.15	0.25
		Second	100	20.0	3.9			
vii)	Professional Ethics	First	160	15.7	3.6	258	2.05	0.41
		Second	100	16.7	3.5			

*Significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 2 exhibited the calculated t-value for social competence between the student teachers based on their year of study to be 2.14 which is significantly greater than the table value (1.97) at a 5% significance level. The mean score of student teachers who are in their second-year of study(146.5) was significantly higher than that of the first-year student teachers (140.9). Thus, the second-year B.Ed. students have better social competence than the first-year B.Ed. students.

Further, the calculated t-value for dimensions of social competence namely communication skill, adaptability & flexibility, and professional ethics were 2.09, 3.08, and 2.05 Respectively. These obtained t-values were significantly greater than the table value (1.97) at a 5% significance level. The mean scores of second-year student teachers (23.4, 20.5, and 16.7) were higher for communication skill, adaptability & flexibility, and professional ethics than the first-year student teachers (22.2, 18.7, and 15.7). The above table also showed the Calculated t-values for inter personal skill (1.51), conflict resolution & problem-solving (0.95), emotional regulation & self-control (0.88), and collaboration & teamwork (1.15) were significantly lesser than the table value (1.97) at a 5% significance



level.

Thus, the student teacher sex habited significant difference in the social competence and its dimensions communication skill, adaptability & flexibility, and professional ethics based on their year of study in B.Ed.

Hypothesis2: There is no significant difference in the social competence and its dimensions i) Communication Skill, ii) Interpersonal Skill, iii) Conflict Resolution & Problem-Solving, iv) Adaptability & Flexibility, v) Emotional Regulation & Self-Control, vi) Collaboration & Teamwork, and vii) Professional Ethics between the student teachers based on their age group. Table 3

Social Competence of Student Teachers based on their age group

S. no	Variable	Age Group	N	Mean	S.D	Df	't' value	p value
1	Social Competence	<30	219	144.4	20.4	258	2.37	0.02
		>30	41	136.2	18.9			
i)	Communication Skill	<30	219	23.1	4.6	258	3.82	0.00
		>30	41	20.1	4.6			
ii)	Interpersonal Skill	<30	219	22.5	5.0	258	2.54	0.12
		>30	41	20.3	4.7			
iii)	Conflict Resolution & Problem-Solving	<30	219	19.8	4.1	258	0.35	0.73
		>30	41	19.6	4.7			
iv)	Adaptability & Flexibility	<30	219	19.4	4.7	258	0.21	0.84
		>30	41	19.2	4.6			
v)	Emotional Regulation & Self-Control	<30	219	23.5	4.6	258	0.72	0.47
		>30	41	22.9	4.2			
vi)	Collaboration & Teamwork	<30	219	19.9	4.1	258	2.38	0.02
		>30	41	18.3	3.8			
vii)	Professional Ethics	<30	219	16.2	3.5	258	0.76	0.45
		>30	41	15.7	3.9			

*Significant at 0.05 level of significance



Cover Page



From the above table the calculated t-value for social competence between the student teachers based on their age group was 2.37 which is significantly greater than the table value (1.97) at a 5% significance level. The mean score of student teachers who were in less than 30 age group (144.4) was significantly higher than that of the student teachers who were in more than 30 age group (136.2). Thus, the student teachers in less than 30 age group have better social competence than the than the student teachers in more than 30 age group.

Further, the calculated t-value for dimensions of social competence namely communication skill, inter personal skill, and collaboration & team work were 3.82, 2.54, and 2.38 respectively. These obtained t-values were significantly greater than the table value (1.97) at a 5% significance level. The mean scores of student teachers in less than 30 age group (23.1, 22.5, and 19.9) were higher for communication skill, interpersonal skill, and collaboration & team work than the student teachers in more than 30 age group (20.1, 20.3, and 18.3). The above table also showed the calculated t-values for conflict resolution & problem-solving (0.35), adaptability & flexibility (0.21), emotional regulation & self-control (0.72), and professional ethics (0.76) were significantly lesser than the table value (1.97) at a 5% significance level.

Thus, the student teacher sex habited significant difference in the social competence and its dimensions communication skill, interpersonal skill, and collaboration & teamwork based on their age group.

Discussion

In the present study, the student teachers had a moderate level of social competence. Also, all the dimensions of social competence namely communication skill, inter personal skill, conflict resolution & problem-solving adaptability & flexibility, emotional regulation & self-control, collaboration & teamwork, and professional ethics were at moderate levels. Also, Charak, Monika, and Kiran (2025) reported that the majority of students enrolled in the Integrated B.A. B.Ed. program exhibited moderate levels of social competence. Rashmi and Rawat (2025) revealed that a majority of teachers exhibited average to above-average social competence. In contrast, Ehtesha muddin and Ahmad (2022) revealed that the student teachers exhibited a high level of social competence. From the outcomes, it is explicit that the social competence of student teachers are moderate or above average. Thus, it may aid in enhancing the learning outcomes of school students as reported in the correlation analysis by Ainy and Pratama, (2020). Based on the results, it is implicit that social competence which is a crucial factor might be inherent or acquired skill among student teachers.



Cover Page



The student teachers exhibited a significant difference in social competence based on their year of study in B.Ed. The second-year B.Ed. Students have better social competence than first-year B.Ed. students. They particularly outperformed in communication skills, interpersonal relationships, and collaboration and team work. Similarly, the students belonging to less than 30 years of age group exhibited better social competence than the students belonging to more the 30 years age group. Also, they scored significantly higher in the following dimensions of social competence: communication skill, interpersonal skill, and collaboration & team work than their counterpart.

Educational Implications

1. The study showed that the prospective teachers had moderate levels of social competence which in turn will enhance the learning out comes among school students. Hence, this could be taken to the next level by placing this as the main professional requirement and conduct hands-on training, workshops, and collaborative activities to refine their skills.
2. Beyond that the student teachers also exhibited moderate scores for the factors of social competence (communication skill, interpersonal skill, collaboration & teamwork, adaptability & flexibility, and professional ethics). Thus, this could directly influence the teaching - learning process when these participant become school teachers.
3. There are certain area / factors of social competence like conflict resolution & Problem- Solving, and emotional regulation & self-control where the students are weak and / or unable to acquire the skills. These areas or lacunae have to be identified and necessary measures must be taken to rectify them.
4. Moreover, the student teachers who are in second-year have better social competence that the first-year students revealing the greater probability of acquiring social skills during the B. Ed. Programme.

Conclusion

The present study explored the level of social competence among student teachers and examined differences across selected demographic variables. The second-year student teachers demonstrated higher levels of social competence than first-year students. This may be attributed to their extended exposure to teaching practice, classroom interactions, and professional training experiences, which enhance communication, adaptability, and professional ethics—dimensions in which they scored significantly higher. Further more,



Cover Page



Student teachers below 30 years of age exhibited greater social competence compared to those above 30 years. This suggests that younger student teachers may adapt more easily to dynamic classroom situations and peer interactions due to greater social flexibility and technological familiarity. Overall, the study underscores the importance of training experiences, professional exposure, and adaptability in nurturing social competence among student teachers. Continuous opportunities for reflective practice, peer collaboration, and communication skill development should be integrated into teacher education programmes to strengthen these competencies.

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Cover Page



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