

SOFT SKILLS AND SOCIAL COMPETENCY OF STUDENT TEACHERS

By

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Abstract

Soft skills in the highly competitive corporate world will help oneself to stand out in a crowd of regular job seekers with ordinary skills and talent. Soft skills help one to shine in the workplace and their significance cannot be denied in this information age. Moreover, to successfully interact with others and cope with the complexities stress, and expectations of modern life, it is vital that all students should acquire social competency essential in providing students to face the real- working environment. The current study was undertaken to examine the soft skills and social competency of student teachers. Sample of the study selected by random sampling technique constituted 300 student teachers of Kanniyakumari district. Significant findings include a) there is no significant difference in soft skills with respect to the selected personal variables like gender, age, educational qualification and discipline. b) there is no significant difference in social competence with respect to the selected personal variables like gender, age, educational qualification, and discipline. c) there is no significant relationship between soft skills and social competency.

Keywords: *soft skills, social competence, student teachers.*

Introduction

Soft skills in the highly competitive corporate world will help oneself to stand out in a crowd of regular job seekers with ordinary skills and talent. Persons who acquire soft skills of high order are more cultured, more reformed and are found to be more successful in every walk of life. Soft skills are personal behavior, signifying how warmly and efficiently you

intermingle with others. Soft skills can be defined as a constellation of socio emotional skills, essential for personal development, social participation and work place success. It includes skills such as communication, ability to work on multidisciplinary teams, adaptability etc. They constitute a corpus of knowledge procedures, competences, aptitudes and attitudes that are needed to carry out various activities to a

certain degree of quality and effectiveness.

Despite many attempts for reform in teacher education to include more practice related skills, teacher training courses need to train appropriate skills to budding teachers. There is a need to incorporate teaching foundation skills or soft skills and related behaviours. Teachers often criticize students for failing to persevere when faced with challenges or critiques, respond appropriately according to situation, engage adequately in teaching exercises, listen to their classmates, closely read assignments, or follow directions. It is mandatory to take steps to remedy the problem by teaching and assessing the qualities and character traits necessary to succeed teacher educands be trained in professional competencies and behaviours called soft skills. Soft skills when defined in contrast to “hard skills”, cover multifarious abilities” such as communication skills, adaptability skills, team skills, negotiation skills, social grace, time management skills, etc. Other professional skills determined by the teacher education programmes may include skills such as counseling,

negotiation, trial practice sessions, conflict resolution, organization and management of work, collaboration and self-evaluation. Teacher education programmes should impart few soft skills in teacher training process.

In order to productively act together with others and deal with the complexities, stress and prospect of modern days, it is vital that all students should acquire social competency essential in providing students to face the real- working environment. The success of an individual in the society depends highly upon the extent to which he has acquired the richness and potency of social competence. Social competency are a complex, multidimensional concept consisting of social, emotional (e.g., affect regulation), cognitive (e.g., fund of information, skills for processing/ acquisition, perspective taking), and behavioral skills, as well as motivational and expectancy. Social competency also reflects having an ability to take another's perspective concerning a situation, learn from past experiences, and apply that learning to the changes in social interactions. Social competency is the foundation upon which an expectation for future interaction with others is built, and

upon which individuals develop perceptions of their own behavior.

Need and Significance of the Study

India achieved remarkably in almost all field. Especially the soft skills in agriculture, science and technology, medicine and education are outstanding. In spite of the various facilities provided to prospective teachers, their education levels are not up to expectations. Soft skills are a set of skills aiming to complete the development of human capital in terms of intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical basis. They are critical and creative thinking skills, problem solving skills, communication skills and group work skills should be mastered and practiced by all students in higher institutions.

In order to successfully interact with others and cope with the complexities stress and expectations of modern life. It is vital that all students should acquire social competency essential in providing students to face the real-working environment. The accomplishment of a human being in the world depends highly upon the extent to which he has acquired the richness and effectiveness of social

competence, desirable for his self-actualization, growth and development for a successful interpersonal interaction, a high order social competence is an essential disposition of an individual.

Soft skills privilege is to shape the children of the nation into useful citizens of tomorrow. Love towards the pupils is the first essential quality of a successful teacher, which adds a glow to his or her personality. The knowledge of soft skills enhances the social behavior of the individual and also promotes social adjustment and understanding. So, the study examined the soft skills and social competence of student teachers.

Objectives of the study

To find significant difference if any, in soft skills of student teachers with regard to background variables.

To find significant difference if any, in social competence of student teachers with regard to background variables.

To find the significant relationship between soft skills and social competence of student teachers.

The background variables are gender, age, medium of instruction,

educational qualification, marital status and discipline.

Hypotheses of the study

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the soft skills of student teachers with regard to background variables.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the social competence of student teachers with regard to background variables.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between soft skills and social competence of student teachers.

The background variables are gender, age, educational qualification, marital status and discipline.

Methodology

Survey method was employed.

Population

The population of the study consists of student teachers of Kanyakumari district.

Sample

300 student teachers studying in various colleges of education in Kanniyakumari district.

Sampling technique

Random sampling technique was used.

Tools Used

The major tools used for the present study are

- i) ABSY'S Scale on Social Competency.
- ii) Soft Skills Inventory

i) ABSY'S Scale on Social Competency

The items regarding social competency were referred and taken from books, journals, and e-resources. The investigator collected materials and prepared a number of positive and negative statements. The items were examined by two experts and the opinions and comments were well incorporated into the tool which was purported to establish the content validity. The final draft had 28 items. The reliability value of ABSY'S scale on social competence scale was 0.584.

ii) Soft Skills Inventory

Soft Skills Inventory was an adopted tool prepared by Sheela R & Kani K (2011). The tool consists of 30 items. The validity of the tool was 0.76 and the reliability of the tool was 0.7.

Analysis of data

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the soft skills of student

teachers with regard to background variables.

Table 1. Difference in the soft skills of student teachers with regard to background variables.

Background Variable	Category	N	Mean	S.D	t- value		Remarks (5% level)
					calculated	table	
Gender	Male	90	56.36	12.325	1.720		
	Female	120	59.08	13.143			
Age	Below 25	167	57.44	12.857	1.231		
	Above 25	133	59.29	13.025			
Educational Qualification	UG	177	58.50	13.066	0.376	1.96	NS
	PG	123	57.93	12.810			
Marital Status	Married	121	56.91	12.055	1.525		
	Unmarried	179	59.18	13.466			
Discipline	Arts	157	57.32	12.298	1.320		
	Science	143	59.30	13.584			

NS – Not Significant

From the table 1 it is inferred that the calculated' value is less than the table 't' value(1.96) at 5% level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. It shows that there is no significant difference in soft skills of student teachers with regard to

background variables like gender, age, educational qualification and discipline.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the social competency of student teachers with regard to background variables.

Table 2. Difference in the social competency of student teachers with regard to background variables.

Background Variable	Category	N	Mean	S.D	t- value		Remarks(5% level)
					calculated	table	
Gender	Male	90	50.17	7.709	0.186		
	Female	120	49.99	7.045			
Age	Below 25	167	50.10	7.662	0.140		
	Above 25	133	49.98	6.695			
Educational Qualification	UG	177	50.08	7.185	0.102	1.96	NS
	PG	123	49.99	7.341			
Marital Status	Married	121	49.70	7.056	0.676		
	Unmarried	179	50.27	7.368			
Discipline	Arts	157	57.32	12.298	1.320		
	Science	143	59.30	13.584			

NS – Not Significant

From the table 2 it is inferred that the calculated' value is less than the table 't' value (1.96) at 5% level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. It shows that there is no significant difference in social competency of student teachers with

regard to background variables like gender, age, educational qualification and discipline.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between soft skills and social competence of student teachers

Table 3. Significance of relationship between Soft skills and Social competence of student teachers

Variables	N	r- value		Remarks (5% level)
		calculated	table	
Soft skills	300	- 0.117	0.138	NS
Social competence				

NS – Not Significant

(The table value of 'r' at 5% level of significance is 0.138)

From the table 3 it is inferred that the calculated 'r' value is less than the table 'r' value (0.138) at 5% level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. It shows that there is no significant relationship between soft skills and social competence of student teachers.

Findings and Discussion

1. There is no significant difference between male and female student teachers in their soft skills. This

may be due to the fact that male and female student teachers were treated equally and they both have equal opportunities to develop their skills. So the male and female student teachers do not differ themselves in soft skills.

2. There is no significant difference between age below 25 and age above 25 student teachers in their soft skills. This may be due to the fact that maturity may not be a factor in developing soft skills. Acquiring skills may not depend on the age everyone sharp their skills. So the student teachers aged below 25 and above 25 do not differ in soft skills.

3. There is no significant difference between UG and PG qualified student teachers in their soft skills. This may be due to the fact that in the advanced technological world, all the student teachers were getting extra knowledge and orientation programs based on soft skills through various media. Hence there exists no significant difference between UG and PG student teachers in soft skills.

4. There is no significant difference between married and unmarried student teachers in their soft skills. This may be due to the fact that, skills does not depends on marital status. Irrespective of marital status the acquisition of soft skills is same. So there is no significant difference between married and unmarried student teachers in their soft skill.
5. There is no significant difference between the student teachers from arts and science discipline in their soft skills. This may be due to the fact that the student teachers have chosen either arts or science subject is based on their interest. The choice may not affect the soft skills. Hence, there is no significant difference between them with respect to discipline.
6. There is no significant difference between male and female student teacher in their social competence. This may be due to the fact that we are living in the competitive world. Without considering gender difference both boys and girls try to achieve their goals.
7. There is no significant difference between age below 25 and age above 25 student teachers in their social competence. This may be due to the fact that both age group student teachers may be aware of new social changes, problems and situations.
8. There is no significant difference between UG and PG qualified student teachers in their social competence. This may be due to the fact that student teachers from both qualification have very much influence with peer group as well as in the community.
9. There is no significant difference between married and unmarried student teachers in their social competence. This may be due to the fact that both married and unmarried student teachers may have aim to be an important personality in the society.
10. There is no significant correlation between soft skills and social competence of student teachers. Thus on the present study if soft skills are developed in student teachers social competence will be

developed on them and they will be successful.

Educational Implications

Soft skills and social competency are important for student teachers to succeed in life. They play a significant role in one's profession. So the investigator has suggested the following educational implications for the present study.

- Student teachers should be trained in soft skills so as to build a cordial relationship among staff and students.
- Proper guidance and counseling services pertaining to all the areas of adjustment should be provided to student teachers.
- Student teachers must be given different types of projects by forming small heterogeneous groups in the class in order to develop soft skills like communication skill, leadership and decision making etc.
- Student teachers can be sent to various colleges for competitions.

So that they can learn adjustment with others in the society.

- Teacher educators should be friendly with all the students and provide equal opportunities to all student teachers for exploration.

Conclusion

Soft skills are important for teacher educands to help them in identifying themselves and their practices. It aids them by providing a reflective practice, modeling them giving teacher students opportunities to practice and providing students with feedback. In a broader sense, soft skills points to attain those goals, values and attitudes which exemplify the noble aspects of the practice of teaching and that enhance the public image of teachers and the teaching profession. It is the job of teacher educators to put the teacher educands in the best position to succeed as good teachers. Student teachers should also acquire social competency to face the real- working environment. The success of an individual in the society depends highly upon the extent to which he has acquired the richness and potency of social competence.

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