Analyzing Social-Emotional Competence of University Students and its Relationship with their Academic Achievement

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ABSTRACT

Five characteristics of social and emotional competence (SEC) help people understand and control their emotions and feelings. These traits are self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship management, and responsible decision-making. The purpose of this paper was to examine the social-emotional competence of university students and its relationship with their academic achievement. The paper has two objectives (1) to analyze the level of social-emotional competence of university students and (2) to investigate the relationship between social-emotional competence and academic achievement of university students. The current study was a descriptive type. The population of this study was all BS, MS/MPhil, and Ph.D. students studying in Pakistani universities. The convenience sample method was used to select a sample comprising 165 students from the said population. An adapted questionnaire with twenty-five statements under five factors of social-emotional competence was used to collect the data from the university students through the online Google form method. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by obtaining experts' opinions, and reliability was ensured through conducting a pilot study. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated as (α=.85). Statistical tests like mean scores and standard deviation were used to assess the university students' social-emotional competence level. The Pearson r correlational test was used to investigate the relationship between independent and dependent variables. This study discovered that university students had a high level of self-awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision-making, a moderate level of social-awareness, and a low level of self-management. In addition, it was revealed that there had a low positive relationship between social-emotional competence (SEC) and academic achievement. This study recommends that a more conducive learning environment should be provided in universities to enhance students' social-emotional competence.

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INTRODUCTION

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is a framework used to promote early childhood social-emotional competence (SEC) (Beland, 2007; Elbertson et al., 2009). Goleman and others established this paradigm in 1994. Social-emotional learning improves self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship management, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2018; 2003; 2008). DePaoli, Atwell, and Bridgeland (2017) noted that the goal of social-emotional learning is to obtain self-awareness, social-awareness, relationship management, self-management, and responsible decision-making.

The SEL framework focuses on five competencies in children. Self-awareness is the capacity to perceive and understand one's own strengths and limitations, feelings and emotions, and how these may impact performance (Beland, 2007). Social-awareness skills involve reading and understanding others' signs and responding properly to their emotions (Frey, Hirschstein, & Guzzo, 2000). Relationship-management component teaches students how to communicate effectively, listen attentively, collaborate, and solve problems together ((Sage & Kindermann, 1999). Self-management abilities include a child's capacity to handle emotions, attitude, stress, and motivation to achieve personal and team objectives (Eisenberg et al., 1995). Responsible decision-making skills teach children to make meaningful, constructive choices (CASEL, 2003). It teaches students how to consider ethics, safety, and society while making choices so they may manage academic and social situations appropriately and contribute to their school and community (CASEL, 2018; 2003; 2008).

Social Emotional Competence (SEC) has five domains that focus on recognising and managing our emotions, developing care and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically (CASEL, 2008). According to CASEL (2008), SEC encompasses a set of skills, including recognizing and managing our emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically. The CASEL model views social-emotional skills at two levels: the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels. The former involves one's understanding and regulation of one's own emotions, whereas the latter involves understanding others' emotions and relationships with others as well as responsible decision-making skills. There are five domains in this framework: self-awareness; social awareness; self-management; relationship management; and responsible decision-making

Children, teens, and adults may learn, model, and practice social and emotional skills to manage everyday tasks, interactions, and problems. SEL helps students develop social-emotional competence by providing caring, cooperative, culturally sensitive, well-managed, participative, and safe classrooms and schools (Osher & Berg, 2017). According to Frydenberg et al., (2017), classroom and school-wide, systematic social and emotional learning programming is applied to build children's social and emotional competence. Many instructors regularly help students develop social and emotional skills. According to Lippard et al., (2018), teachers' encouragement makes pupils more likely to act well and less likely to misbehave. Moreover, positive teacher-child relationships increase students' psychosocial skills and classroom communication and negative teacher-child relationships affect children's behaviour and make them worried. Teachers' negative communication affects children's emotional, social, and behavioural abilities (Breeman et al., 2015; Zins et al., 2004).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies have suggested that social and emotional learning in early age can support children's cognitive development and improve their learning (Denham et al., 2012). Children's success or failure in areas such as sociability, school readiness, academic achievement, learning, and overcoming other challenges is closely linked to their social and emotional developmental skills. While unsuccessful transitions can trap children in a cycle of social and academic failure, successful transitions to school environments can position young children for both academic and social success. Researchers have emphasized the importance of creating positive experiences during the early school years to enhance children's attitudes, emotions, and learning abilities. Furthermore, students must feel good about themselves and actively participate in social activities from an early age to achieve future academic success (Denham et al., 2012).

In addition, researchers have also demonstrated in a number of studies that students' academic achievement and their social and emotional development are related. Researchers must concentrate on encouraging students' social and emotional abilities to develop in a healthy way in order to ensure successful educational achievements. Nix, Bierman, Domitrovich, and Gill (2013) state that students' social and emotional competency directly affects their learning engagement, which in turn supports their academic achievement both now and in the future. Additionally, additional social and emotional support for students is required to ensure better test scores and strong academic achievement (Nix et al., 2013). Furthermore, Morris, Millenky, Raver, and Jones (2013) stated that a supportive social and emotional environment is necessary to help students achieve their educational tasks.

Shdown and Bernard (2011) highlighted numerous studies demonstrating the beneficial long-term impacts of early social and emotional skill instruction. They emphasized that to encourage learning, an effective early childhood educator should engage verbally with children. Additionally, Ashdown and Bernard highlighted the significance of social and emotional skills for young children's academic success across all subject areas, as well as their overall well-being.

According to Collie, Martin, Nassar, and Roberts (2018), students need strong social and emotional skills to maintain health and well-being both inside and outside the classroom. Additionally, Collie et al. (2018) demonstrated that increased social and emotional competence is positively correlated with improved academic performance, school readiness, educational engagement, completion and continuation rates, and overall well-being.

In view of the above importance of social-emotional competencies and their relationship with students' academic achievement and well-being, this research aims to achieve the following objectives in the context of Pakistani university students.

Objectives of the Study
- To assess the level of social-emotional competence of university students
- To investigate the relationship between social-emotional competence and academic achievement of university students

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study was a descriptive type. The population of this study was all BS, MS/MPhil, and Ph.D. students studying in Pakistani universities. A convenience sample method was used to select a sample comprising 165 students from the said population. An adapted questionnaire (Zhou & Ee, 2012) with twenty-five statements under five factors of social-emotional competence was used to collect data from university students through the Google form online. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by obtaining experts' opinions, and reliability was ensured through conducting a pilot study. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated as (α=.85). Statistical tests like mean scores and standard deviation were used to assess the university students' social-emotional competence level. The Pearson r correlational test was used to investigate the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Table 1: Gender of the university students

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	60	36.4	36.4
Female	105	63.6	100.0
Total	165	100.0	

Results reported in Table 1 show that male students were 60 (35.4%) while female students were 105 (63%) who participated in this study.

Table 2: University sector of the students

Sector	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Public	123	74.5	74.5
Private	42	25.5	100.0
Total	165	100.0	

Results described in Table 2 show that students studying in public sector universities were 123 (74.5%) while students studying in private sector universities were 42 (25.5%) who participated in this study.

Table 3: Programs enrolled of the university students

Program	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
BS	125	75.8	75.8
MPhil	19	11.5	87.3
PhD	11	6.7	93.9
Others	10	6.1	100.0
Total	165	100.0	

Results stated in Table 3 show that students studying in BS programs were 125 (75.8%), studying in MPhil programs were 19 (11.5%), studying in PhD programs 11 (6.7%) and studying in other programs 10 (6.1%) who participated in this study.

Table 4: Last Exam's CGPA of the university students

CGPA	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Below 2.5	18	10.9	10.9
2.5 to 3.0	31	18.8	29.7
3.0 to 3.5	48	29.1	58.8
3.5 to 4.0	68	41.2	100.0
Total	165	100.0	

Results demonstrated in Table 4 show the academic achievements of the students in the form of CGPA of their last exams. It shows that students who achieved below 2.5 CGPA were 18 (10.9%), who achieved 2.5 to 3.0 CGPA were 31 (18.8%), who achieved 3.0 to 3.5 CGPA were 48 (29.1%) and who achieved 3.5 to 4.0 CGPA were 68 (41.2%).

Table 5: Mean scores and std. deviations of university students' responses towards the items of Social Emotional Competence (SEC). (N=165).

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Indicator A: Self-Awareness		
1.I am aware of what I think and do	4.2364	.78002
2.I know why I do what I do	4.1152	.82938
3.I realize my feelings and moods	4.2242	.89954
4.I understand when I am moody	4.1576	.79596
5.I have ability to read anger on people's face	4.0424	.96494
Overall results of indicator A:	4.15	0.853
Indicator B: Social-Awareness		
1.I can identify how people feel by watching their fiscal expressions	3.7758	.92625
2.I can easily understand why people feel the way they do	3.3455	1.03390
3.I believe that I can identify what people are thinking when they are sad, angry or happy	3.0788	1.04757
4.I know why persons react the way they do	3.6667	1.02012
5.If a friend is disturbed, I can assume its reason	3.4909	1.09108
Overall results of indicator B:	3.47	1.023
Indicator C: Self-Management/Control		

1.I have the ability to stay calm in a stressful situation	2.8182	1.26526
2.I have the ability to stay calm and overcome anxiety in any new situation	3.3333	1.06114
3.I have the ability to stay calm when things go wrong	2.4242	1.08286
4.I have the ability to control my feelings when something bad happens	3.3333	1.11165
5.When I become upset with others, I always try to wait till my calmness resumes before discussing the problems	3.7091	1.09332
Overall results of indicator C:	3.12	1.122
Indicator D: Relationship Management		
1.I apology when I upset my friend unintentionally	4.3818	.77674
2.Mostly I try to comfort my friends when I see they are sad	4.4727	.69461
3.I never criticize my friends if we quarrel	4.0242	.86920
4.I practice tolerance on my friend's mistakes	3.9879	.88337
5.I have the competency to stand up for myself without putting my friends down	3.9939	1.02705
Overall results of indicator D:	4.17	0.850
Indicator E: Responsible decision making		
1.I know that I am responsible for my actions while making decisions	4.0727	.81573
2.I confirm more positive results when making a choice	4.0424	.88588
3.I always assess the strength of the situation before making a decision on my actions	3.8364	.93893
4.I chose a criteria before making my recommendations	3.8970	.89459
5.I have the ability to consider the strength as well as weakness of the plan before deciding to use it.	4.0303	.84409
Overall results of indicator E:	3.97	0.875

The results reported in Table 5 show the students' responses to each item of social-emotional competence (SEC). The results indicate that students had a high level of Self-Awareness (M = 4.15, SD = 0.853), a moderate level of Social-Awareness (M = 3.47, SD = 1.023), a low level of Self-Management/Control (M = 3.12, SD = 1.122), a high level of Relationship Management (M = 4.17, SD = 0.850), and a high level of Responsible Decision-Making (M = 3.97, SD = 0.875).

Table 6: Relationship between social emotional competence (SEC) and academic achievement (Correlation)

Variables		SEC	CGPA
	Pearson Correlation		.137
SEC	Sig. (2-tailed)		.079
	N	165	165
	Pearson Correlation	.137	
CGPA	Sig. (2-tailed)	.079	
	N	165	165

Results of correlation analysis are reported in Table 6, which shows that social-emotional competence (SEC) and CGPA had a weak positive relationship (r=.137) and were statistically not significant (p-value =.079>.05 levels).

Table 7: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.137a	.019	.013	1.01452

a. Predictors: (Constant), SEC

Table 7.1: ANOVAa

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	3.225	1	3.225	3.133	.079b
1	Residual	167.769	163	1.029		
	Total	170.994	164			

a. Dependent Variable: CGPA
b. Predictors: (Constant), SEC

Table 7.2: Coefficientsa

Model		Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.832	.668		2.742	.007
	SEC	.311	.176	.137	1.770	.079

a. Dependent Variable: CGPA

Statistics of Tables 7, 7.1 and 7.2 report the outcomes of regression analysis that was performed with CGPA as depended variable and SEC as an independent variable. The regression model showed only a 1.9% variance in CGPA (R^2=0.019). In addition, the ANOVA results showed that the model is not significant (F= 3.133, p=0.079) which revealed that SEC does not have a significant impact on CGPA.

CONCLUSIONS

This study revealed that the majority of university students were female, most of the students belonged to public sector universities, and the majority were studying in BS programs, and most had a CGPA of 3.5 to 4.0 in their last exams. The study found that university students had a high level of self-awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision-making, a moderate level of social-awareness, and a low level of self-management. Moreover,

this investigation revealed that there was a low positive relationship between social-emotional competence (SEC) and academic achievement (r = 0.137). Additionally, the study discovered that SEC accounted for only 1.9% of the variance in the academic achievement of university students due to SEC. Therefore, the study recommends that university teachers should adopt the social-emotional learning (SEL) framework in their teaching to enhance the social-emotional competence (SEC) of students.

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