# Social Competence of Professional Undergraduate Students: Effects of Gender, Economic Status, and Locale

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## Abstract

Social competence is a crucial skill that enables individuals to interact effectively within social environments. It encompasses leadership, teamwork, emotional intelligence, communication abilities, and flexibility. This study investigates the social competence levels of students enrolled in the Integrated B.A. B.Ed. program at the Central University of Jammu. The focus is on examining how gender, economic status, and locale (rural vs. urban) influence social competence. Data was gathered using the Social Competence Scale (SCS-SLRP) developed by Dr. Latika Sharma and Dr. Punita Rani (2010). The findings provide insights into how these variables affect social competence, with an emphasis on educational policies and teaching techniques aimed at improving students' social development.

**Keywords:** social competence, gender, economic status, locale, undergraduate students

## Introduction

Social competence plays a vital role in personal and professional development, including success in both academic and workplace environments. It includes skills such as leadership, communication, emotional intelligence, and the ability to collaborate. Goldfried and D'Zurilla (1969) defined social competence as the ability to adapt effectively to social situations, handling interpersonal problems and coping with social conditions in a way that results in positive outcomes.

In professional environments, social competence is essential for teamwork, conflict resolution, and career advancement. Gresham and Reschly (1987) identified interpersonal, self-related, and task-related behaviours as crucial to social competence. Individuals with strong social competence tend to exhibit better academic performance, enhanced peer relationships, and greater adaptability in diverse social settings.

This study aims to explore how gender, economic status, and locale influence the social competence of students in a professional undergraduate program. By identifying disparities and patterns, the research seeks to provide insights into educational policies and teaching methods that can enhance students' social competence.

The developing social competence of individuals faces substantial impact from gender differences and socioeconomic status (SES) together with the geographic location where they live. Research findings indicate that boys tend to display leadership mannerisms whereas girls demonstrate superior emotional

grounding and teamwork skills (Misra, 2019). Students from upper socioeconomic backgrounds develop better social skills because they access more social engagement opportunities together with extracurricular activities and mentorship programs. Students who come from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds experience barriers that prevent them from developing social abilities (Putallaz & Gottman 1982). The environments students live in affect their social competence because the diverse social settings in urban areas promote enhanced social adaptability compared to rural areas (Vaughn & Haager, 1994).

**Significance of the Study**

The research holds value because it examines social competence development in students who study Integrated B.A. B.Ed. while preparing to become teachers. Social competence presents a vital necessity to fulfil needs of academic performance together with classroom management capabilities and effective communicative abilities. The social competence of professional undergraduate students remains understudied even though it represents an important area of inquiry.

Research conducted by Nayak (2014) revealed gender and location play a significant role in social competence results where female and urban students obtained higher scores. Bakashi and Roma (2015) established that social competence has a positive impact on academic achievement which makes this factor crucial for B.A. B.Ed. students who need to manage their studies alongside teaching practice.

Researchers including Syiem and Nongrum (2014) and Bala (2016) have found economic status and gender gaps as factors influencing social competence. The results highlight the necessity of providing specific educational support to girls and students from rural regions and lower-income backgrounds because they often lack social development opportunities.

An analysis of gender disparities combined with assessment of economic status and location effects expands current research findings and provides real-world applications. Institutional leaders and policy developers can use these insights to create programming that builds social skill competencies amongst future teachers so they can provide better education and foster students' comprehensive academic development.

**Objective of the study**

The study aim to address the following research questions:

1. To study the level of social competences among students pursuing professional undergraduate programme.
2. To study the social competences of students with respect to their gender.
3. To study the social competence of students with respect to their economic status.
4. To study the social competence of students with respect to their locale.

**Methodology**

The research relied on quantitative methods to study student social abilities while exploring how demographic gender and financial standing and residential area influence their development. The entire student cohort from the Integrated B.A. B.Ed. program at the Central University of Jammu formed the research population. Research included 140 participants from diverse gender and socioeconomic and rural and urban areas who were selected through incidental sampling methods. Data collection happened through the Social Competence Scale (SCS-SLRP) that Dr. Latika Sharma and Dr. Punita Rani (2010) developed. The participants assessed their social competence across different circumstances and

researchers categorized their cumulative scores into Very Good, Good, Average, Poor or Very Poor categories. The data summary included descriptive statistics which employed mean and standard deviation values while the t-test performed inferential analysis for social competence variations associated with gender groups and economic conditions and urban/rural areas. Participants provided their responses after providing full consent as researchers maintained ethical guidelines for confidentiality and privacy of their personal information

**Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher began data collection after getting internal approval from the Department of Educational Studies at Central University of Jammu following the tool's finalization. The research team dedicated one month to gather data from undergraduate students who were studying the Integrated B.A. B.Ed. program. When the researcher received advance university authorization, they joined classes while respecting classroom teaching procedures. A two-step process composed the data collection strategy. The researcher first established trust with participants then clarified that responses would stay confidential while benefiting academic research. The Social Competence Scale received distribution alongside explicit instructions for proper use. Students completed their questionnaires after sufficient time for deep consideration before the researcher collected them. The structured approach established an accurate data collection foundation that allowed researchers to use t-test for analysis in subsequent study stages.

**Interpretation and Analysis of data**

**Objective 1: Level of Social Competence in Terms of Total Scores**

Table.1 shows the level of Social Competence in terms of total scores

| Categories | Description | Range of Scores | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | Very Good | 188-218 | 1 |
| B | Good | 157-187 | 14 |
| C | Average | 126-156 | 75 |
| D | Poor | 95-125 | 49 |
| E | Very Poor | 64-94 | 1 |

Interpretation: The majority of students (75) exhibit average social competence, followed by those in the "poor" category (49). Only one student each falls into the 'very good' and 'very poor' categories, suggesting that most students possess moderate social competence.

**Objective 2: Comparison of Social Competence Based on Gender**

Table 2 Shows the level of Social Competence in terms of total scores

| S .NO | Gender | N | Mean | S. D | SEM | T | SIGNIFICANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Male | 67 | 127.83 | 23.26 | 2.8417 | 3.1312** | It is significant at 0.01 level |
| 2 | Female | 73 | 139.93 | 22.45 | 2.6276 | | |
| Total | - | 140 | | | | | |

Table 2. shows that social competence scores based on gender shows a significant difference between male and female students pursuing professional undergraduate programs. The mean social competence score for male students is 127.83 with a standard deviation of 23.26, whereas the mean score for female students is 139.93 with a standard deviation of 22.45. The calculated t-value is 3.1312, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that female students have significantly higher social competence than male students. The result suggests that gender plays an important role in influencing the level of social competence among students. Female students may have better social skills, adaptability, and interpersonal abilities compared to their male counterparts, which could be attributed to various social and developmental factors.

**OBJECTIVE 3 To study the level of Social Competence based on Locale**
**Table.3 LEVEL OF SOCIAL COMPETENCE IN TERMS OF TOTAL SCORES.**
**TO COMPARE SOCIAL COMPETENCE BASED ON LOCALE**

| S. No. | Locale | Gender | N | Mean | S.D. | SEM | T-Value | Level of significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Rural | Male | 39 | 127.83 | 23.26 | 3.7246 | 2.4095 | Significant at 0.05 |
| 2 | Rural | Female | 44 | 139.93 | 22.45 | 3.3845 | | |
| 3 | Urban | Male | 28 | 127.83 | 23.26 | 4.3957 | 1.9986 | Significant at 0.05 |
| 4 | Urban | Female | 29 | 139.93 | 22.45 | 4.1689 | | |
| Total | - | - | 140 | | | | | |

**Interpretation:** The study analysed social competence differences by local environment (rural and urban) through distinct research for boys and girls. A study of rural students revealed male participants scored 127.83 (SD = 23.26) in social competence whereas female participants scored 139.93 (SD = 22.45). The t-value calculation of 2.4095 signifies statistical significance at the 0.05 threshold. The scores reveal that rural female students outperform rural male students in social competence metrics.

The data showed urban students reported social competence at 127.83 mean points (SD = 23.26) for males yet females scored 139.93 points with SD = 22.45. A t-value assessment revealed 1.9986 which met significance at the 0.05 level. Females attending urban schools score higher on social competence measures than their male counterparts do according to statistical testing.

The research demonstrates female students exhibit superior social competence abilities relative to male students regardless of urban or rural environments. The research patterns show male and female score differences across locations by emphasizing gender over locale effects on social competence measurements.

**OBJECTIVE4 To study the level of Social Competence based on Economic Status**
**Table.4 LEVEL OF SOCIAL COMPETENCE IN TERMS OF TOTAL SCORES.**

| Economic Status | Gender | N | Mean | S.D. | SEM | T-Value | LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lower-class | Male | 9 | 130.56 | 22.20 | 7.40 | - | |

| Economic Status | Gender | N | Mean | S.D. | SEM | T-Value | LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Middle-class | Male | 53 | 128.13 | 17.70 | 2.4313 | 3.77688 ** | Highly significant at any level |
| Middle-class | Female | 66 | 140.26 | 17.18 | 2.1147 | | |
| Upper-class | Male | 5 | 119.80 | 5.02 | 2.2450 | 1.7825 | Not significant at any level |
| Upper-class | Female | 7 | 136.86 | 20.70 | 7.8239 | | |

**Interpretation:** An economic status analysis of professional undergraduate students' social competence was performed through mean score examinations between different economic groups and genders.

Nine male students from this group were available for data collection (N=9). The analysis revealed a mean social competence value of 130.56 with 22.20 standard deviation across 7.40 standard error. Limited data entries from female students in the lower economic class prevented the conduct of a t-test analysis.

Male students from middle-class backgrounds scored 128.13 and displayed a standard deviation of 17.70 (N=53), yet female students achieved higher scores of 140.26 with 17.18 as their standard deviation (N=66). This significant t-value of 3.7768 demonstrated middle-class females exhibited social competence levels which exceeded those of their male classmates by a substantial margin.

Students from upper-class families achieved different mean social competence scores. Male students (N=5) achieved a score of 119.80 (S.D = 5.02) while female students (N=7) scored 136.86 (S.D = 20.70). The results remained non-significant. Statistical analysis using the t-value (1.7825) indicated no significant difference in scores between upper-class females and males.

The study reveals that economic background together with gender creates a measurable effect on social competence development. Middle-class females demonstrate substantially greater social competence than middle-class males according to research findings.

## DISSCUSSION

This research investigated how undergraduate professional students perform socially based on their gender makeup together with their economic background and location information. 140 students participated in research that yielded vital information about social competence links to demographic factors.

Findings showed the majority of students maintained average social competence scores yet very few students displayed marked high or low competence levels at once. The surveyed students exhibit basic interpersonal skills yet additional work needs to be done to enhance their superior social abilities which include leadership along with emotional control and teamwork capabilities.

The study results showed that female students scored higher on social competence evaluations than their male counterparts in significant statistical measures. The observed statistical significance reached the 0.01 threshold. A wide range of earlier studies confirm that females start developing advanced communication capabilities and better empathy and adaptable behavioural patterns during their developmental period. Such differences between female and male students could stem from cultural patterns combined with societal norms.

Across both rural and urban settings female students maintained superior social competence results when compared to male students. The sociocultural differences between urban and rural areas did not impact the more pronounced gender-based influence on social competence. Research findings indicate that

gender-based training methods have stronger influence on social skill development than the environmental elements linked to specific geographical areas.

Male students experienced significant effects from their economic level regarding their social competence development. Middle-class female students demonstrated significantly stronger social competence performance than their middle-class male counterparts. Females from upper-class households maintained higher social competence scores but the results failed to reach statistical significance. Lower-class boys showed solid social competence levels which may stem from their strong community connections and early childhood responsibilities that needed social adaptability. The absence of lower-class female participants in the study sample prevented a comprehensive comparison between these groups.

This study demonstrates that gender characteristics and economic background act together to fundamentally affect students' social competencies. Environmental factors influenced social competence but gender differences remained more prominent across both high and lower class communities.

## Findings of the study

The majority of students enrolled in the Integrated B.A. B.Ed. program exhibited average levels of social competence, indicating a moderate level of social skills.

**A.** Social competence scores submitted by female students exhibited greater significance compared to male students during the research.

**B.** Analysis of social competence scores demonstrated that female students surpassed male students across rural and urban areas which indicates gender played a stronger role than the region.

**C.** Social competence reached its peak among middle-class female students who showed statistically meaningful higher levels than middle-class male students.

**D.** Female students in households earning the highest incomes outscored their male counterparts yet the statistical significance was insufficient to validate this pattern.

**E.** The lack of female participants in the lower economic group prevented researchers from conducting comparable social competence evaluations by gender.

## Conclusion

Research on professional undergraduate students showed that most participants scored within the average range for social competence. The research results indicate female students showed superior social competence levels compared to male students who studied both in urban and rural locations. Professional education must recognize gender variations in social development because this pattern remains steady throughout the academic year.

Middle-class students demonstrated higher social competence scores when the female cohort reached the middle economic bracket. Longer access to resources among high-class students resulted in diminished gender disparities in social competence abilities. This study faced limitations because it lacked lower-class female participants making comprehensive comparison between groups impossible.

The living environment of students (urban or rural) demonstrated limited influence on their social competence when compare to gender-based differences. Environmental variables show lower importance compared to the gender-based socialization processes through which students learn interpersonal abilities. Social competence development programs need to emphasize their importance because research shows that these skills require special attention for male students and students from economic disadvantage backgrounds. Future studies require broader economic representation in their participant selection and

investigation of cultural along with family-related variables in order to develop an enhanced comprehension of professional undergraduate students' social competence factors.

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