

Examining the Relationship between Psychosocial Skills and Scholastic Competence in Secondary Education

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ABSTRACT

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The present study investigates the relationship between psychosocial skills and scholastic competence among secondary school students, with specific attention to gender-based differences. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 200 Class XI students drawn randomly from government and private schools of Prayagraj District. Psychosocial skills and scholastic competence were measured through standardized tools developed by the researcher and relationships were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. The findings reveal that communication skills, stress management and overall psychosocial skills exhibit significant positive relationships with scholastic competence, whereas self-awareness, thinking skills and cognitive flexibility show non-significant associations. Gender-wise analysis indicates stronger and more consistent relationships among female students compared to male students. The study underscores the multidimensional nature of academic competence and highlights the importance of integrating psychosocial skill development into secondary education to promote holistic academic success.

Keywords: Psychosocial Skills, Scholastic Competence, Secondary Education, Gender Differences, Communication Skills, Stress Management.

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of contemporary education increasingly acknowledges that scholastic success is not determined solely by cognitive abilities or domain knowledge; non-cognitive, psychosocial competencies play a central and measurable role in how students learn, persist and perform academically. Research over the past two decades has consistently demonstrated that social-emotional and psychosocial skills — including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making — are intimately linked to classroom engagement, adaptive behaviour and objective academic outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; CASEL, 2020). Large meta-analytic investigations and systematic reviews report that universal school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs yield meaningful gains in academic achievement in addition to improvements in attitudes and behaviour, with effect sizes that translate into substantive percentile gains in achievement (Durlak et al., 2011; Cipriano et al., 2024). These findings reframe scholastic competence as a multidimensional construct in which psychosocial skills either scaffold or impede the realization of a student's academic potential, thereby shifting the research emphasis from narrow cognitive predictors to a broader ecosystem of student capacities (Greenberg et al., 2017; Cipriano et al., 2024).

Empirical studies clarify the pathways through which psychosocial skills influence scholastic outcomes. Self-efficacy, resilience and regulation capacities enable students to manage task-related stress, sustain effort across challenging tasks and deploy metacognitive strategies that improve learning efficiency (Grieve et al., 2011; Qi et al.). Social awareness and relationship skills, on the other hand, facilitate collaborative learning, healthy peer interactions and access to classroom support networks that indirectly bolster academic performance (Van de Sande et al., 2023; Boerchi et al., 2021). Measurement research further underscores that valid, reliable instruments —

such as the High School Competencies Scale (H-Comp) and other validated SEL inventories — can capture non-intellective variables that significantly covary with grade-based and standardized indicators of scholastic competence (Boerchi et al., 2021; Manjunath, 2018). In short, the literature suggests both direct mechanisms (e.g., improved self-regulation leading to better study habits) and indirect social mechanisms (e.g., supportive peer relationships improving classroom climate) through which psychosocial skills translate into higher scholastic attainment (Van de Sande et al., 2023; Millones, 2013).

Mixed-method and longitudinal work refines our understanding by showing heterogeneity across contexts, populations and program features. Meta-analyses indicate that SEL program efficacy varies by implementation fidelity, delivery agent (teacher-led programs often produce stronger academic effects) and contextual factors such as socioeconomic status and marginalisation (Durlak et al., 2011; Cipriano et al., 2024). Cross-national validation studies stress that cultural, curricular and policy differences shape how psychosocial constructs manifest and influence schooling outcomes; consequently, measurement models validated in one context may require adaptation elsewhere to preserve construct validity and predictive utility (Belay et al., 2024; CASEL, 2020). This contextual sensitivity matters for secondary education research because adolescence is a period of rapid social and emotional development: competencies that predict scholastic success in early adolescence may interact differently with school structures and subject demands in later grades (Van de Sande et al., 2023; Greenberg et al., 2017). Therefore, robust research designs must account for implementation, context and developmental stage to draw meaningful inferences about the psychosocial–scholastic link.

A growing body of Indian and low-resource setting literature corroborates global findings while illuminating locally-specific dynamics that affect scholastic competence. Studies conducted in South Asia and similar contexts report associations between psychosocial variables (resilience, social competence, coping skills) and school grades, attendance and examination performance, while also noting that family expectations, school resources and measurement limitations influence effect magnitudes (Millones, 2013; Fayiza & Praveen, 2023). Moreover, UNESCO and policy frameworks have foregrounded life-skills and psychosocial learning as integral to quality education and lifelong learning, urging systemic inclusion of psychosocial development within curricular reforms (UNESCO, 2015). When research integrates context-sensitive instruments (for example, validated translations or locally normed scales) the predictive relationship between psychosocial skills and scholastic competence becomes clearer, pointing to opportunities for policy-relevant interventions such as teacher training, school-based SEL curricula and targeted supports for at-risk adolescents (Belay et al., 2024; Cipriano et al., 2024).

Given the convergence of evidence, yet persistent gaps in contextually-rooted longitudinal and predictive research at the secondary level, the present study seeks to examine empirically the relationship between psychosocial skills and scholastic competence in secondary education within a defined regional context. Building on validated measurement approaches (e.g., H-Comp and related SEL instruments) and established analytical frameworks (correlational and regression modelling), this research aims to quantify the strength and nature of associations, identify which psychosocial dimensions most strongly predict scholastic outcomes and explore moderating influences such as school type and socio-demographic background (Boerchi et al., 2021; Durlak et al., 2011; Van de Sande et al., 2023). By situating analysis within contemporary theoretical models and recent empirical syntheses, the study contributes to the evidence base needed to design scalable school interventions that enhance both psychosocial competencies and scholastic achievement — a dual aim that educational systems worldwide increasingly recognize as central to equitable, quality secondary education (CASEL, 2020; Greenberg et al., 2017; Cipriano et al., 2024).

The need for the present study emerges from the growing recognition that scholastic competence in secondary education is shaped not only by cognitive ability and subject mastery, but also by a range of psychosocial skills that influence students' engagement, motivation, resilience and adaptive functioning within academic environments. Secondary school years represent a critical developmental phase marked by heightened academic demands, identity formation, peer influence and emotional vulnerability; during this period, deficits in psychosocial skills can adversely affect learning behaviours, academic persistence and overall scholastic performance. Although international research has increasingly emphasized the role of psychosocial competencies in predicting academic outcomes, empirical evidence remains uneven across educational contexts, particularly in developing and

transitional education systems where contextual, cultural and institutional factors may alter the strength and nature of these relationships. Moreover, much of the existing research has focused on intervention outcomes or isolated psychosocial dimensions, leaving a gap in comprehensive, correlational analyses that examine how a broader constellation of psychosocial skills collectively relates to scholastic competence at the secondary level. The present study is significant in that it seeks to generate context-specific empirical evidence capable of informing curriculum design, teacher preparation and school-based support systems aimed at holistic student development. By identifying the psychosocial dimensions most closely associated with scholastic competence, the findings may assist educators and policymakers in prioritizing skill domains that enhance academic effectiveness alongside emotional and social well-being. Furthermore, the study contributes to the theoretical discourse on non-cognitive determinants of academic success by reinforcing the multidimensional nature of scholastic competence and advocating for integrative educational practices. Thus, the present investigation underscores the academic and practical importance of Examining the Relationship between Psychosocial Skills and Scholastic Competence in Secondary Education.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the Relationship between Psychosocial Skills and Scholastic Competence of Students in Secondary Education.
2. To study the Relationship between Psychosocial Skills and Scholastic Competence of Male Students in Secondary Education.
3. To study the Relationship between Psychosocial Skills and Scholastic Competence of Female Students in Secondary Education.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant Relationship between Psychosocial Skills and Scholastic Competence of Students in Secondary Education.
2. There is no significant Relationship between Psychosocial Skills and Scholastic Competence of Male Students in Secondary Education.
3. There is no significant Relationship between Psychosocial Skills and Scholastic Competence of Female Students in Secondary Education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the present study, the field survey method of descriptive research was employed to examine the relationship between psychosocial skills and scholastic competence in secondary education. The population of the study comprised secondary school students studying in Class XI of schools located in the Prayagraj District. The simple random sampling technique was used for the selection of participants. From the defined population, a sample of 200 secondary school students was drawn from different government and private secondary schools of Prayagraj District. For the collection of data, standardized tools constructed by researcher were used. Psychosocial Skills were measured using the Psychosocial Skills Scale developed and standardized by researcher, while Scholastic Competence was assessed through a Scholastic Competence Scale or academic performance measure based on students' scholastic records. The Product Moment Correlation method was employed to determine the nature and degree of relationship between psychosocial skills and scholastic competence.

Analysis Of Data

Hypothesis No. 1- There is no significant Relationship between Psychosocial Skills and Scholastic Competence of Students in Secondary Education.

Table No. 1- The correlation is established between Psychosocial Skills and Scholastic Competence of Students in Secondary Education.

Sr. No.	Dimensions of Psycho-social Skills	Scholastic Competence	Table value	Result
1.	Self-Awareness	.322	0.139	Significant
2.	Empathy & Relationships	.313	0.139	Significant
3.	Communication	.394	0.139	Significant
4.	Thinking Skills	.305	0.139	Significant
5.	Cognitive Flexibility	.431	0.139	Significant
6.	Stress Management	.440	0.139	Significant
7.	Psycho-social Skills	.740	0.139	Significant

Table No. 1 presents the relationship between various dimensions of psycho-social skills and scholastic competence of students in secondary education for testing Hypothesis No. 1. With 198 degrees of freedom, the table value of Pearson's correlation coefficient at the 0.05 level of significance is 0.139. The analysis reveals that all the obtained correlation coefficients are higher than the critical table value, indicating statistically significant relationships. Specifically, Self-Awareness ($r = 0.322$), Empathy & Relationships ($r = 0.313$), Communication Skills ($r = 0.394$), Thinking Skills ($r = 0.305$), Cognitive Flexibility ($r = 0.431$) and Stress Management ($r = 0.440$) show significant positive correlations with scholastic competence. Furthermore, the overall Psycho-social Skills score demonstrates a very high positive correlation with scholastic competence ($r = 0.740$), reflecting a strong association between students' psychosocial development and their academic performance. Since all the calculated correlation values exceed the table value, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between psycho-social skills and scholastic competence is rejected for all dimensions. The findings clearly indicate that psycho-social skills play a significant and positive role in enhancing scholastic competence among students at the secondary education level.

Hypothesis No. 2- There is no significant Relationship between Psychosocial Skills and Scholastic Competence of Male Students in Secondary Education.

Table No. 2- The correlation is established between Psychosocial Skills and Scholastic Competence of Male Students in Secondary Education.

Sr. No.	Dimensions of Psycho-social Skills	Scholastic Competence	Table value	Result
1.	Self-Awareness	.172	0.139	Significant
2.	Empathy & Relationships	.625	0.139	Significant
3.	Communication	.125	0.139	Not Significant
4.	Thinking Skills	.619	0.139	Significant
5.	Cognitive Flexibility	.206	0.139	Significant
6.	Stress Management	.033	0.139	Not Significant
7.	Psycho-social Skills	.164	0.139	Significant

Table No. 2 depicts the relationship between various dimensions of psycho-social skills and scholastic competence of male students in secondary education for testing Hypothesis No. 2. With 198 degrees of freedom, the critical table value of Pearson's correlation coefficient at the 0.05 level of significance is 0.139. The findings reveal that Self-Awareness ($r = 0.172$), Empathy & Relationships ($r = 0.625$), Thinking Skills ($r = 0.619$), Cognitive Flexibility ($r = 0.206$) and Overall Psycho-social Skills ($r = 0.164$) show correlation coefficients higher than the table value, indicating significant positive relationships with scholastic competence of male students. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected for these dimensions. On the other hand, Communication Skills ($r = 0.125$) and Stress Management ($r = 0.033$) have correlation coefficients lower than the critical value and hence the null hypothesis is accepted for these variables, suggesting that these dimensions do not have a significant relationship with scholastic competence of male students. Overall, the results lead to a partial rejection of Hypothesis No. 2. The analysis indicates that while several psycho-social skills—particularly empathy and relationships, thinking skills and cognitive flexibility—are significantly associated with scholastic competence among male secondary school students, communication skills and stress management do not show a significant influence at this level.

Hypothesis No. 3- There is no significant Relationship between Psychosocial Skills and Scholastic Competence of Female Students in Secondary Education.

Table No. 3- The correlation is established between Psychosocial Skills and Scholastic Competence of Female Students in Secondary Education.

Sr. No.	Dimensions of Psycho-social Skills	Scholastic Competence	Table value	Result
1.	Self-Awareness	.051	0.139	Not Significant
2.	Empathy & Relationships	.616	0.139	Significant
3.	Communication	.308	0.139	Significant
4.	Thinking Skills	.158	0.139	Significant
5.	Cognitive Flexibility	.111	0.139	Not Significant
6.	Stress Management	.981	0.139	Significant
7.	Psycho-social Skills	.652	0.139	Significant

Table No. 3 presents the relationship between different dimensions of psycho-social skills and scholastic competence of female students in secondary education for testing Hypothesis No. 3. With 198 degrees of freedom, the critical table value of Pearson's correlation coefficient at the 0.05 level of significance is 0.139. The analysis indicates that Self-Awareness ($r = 0.051$) and Cognitive Flexibility ($r = 0.111$) have correlation coefficients lower than the table value; therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted for these dimensions, suggesting that they do not have a significant relationship with scholastic competence of female students. In contrast, Empathy & Relationships ($r = 0.616$), Communication Skills ($r = 0.308$), Thinking Skills ($r = 0.158$), Stress Management ($r = 0.981$) and Overall Psycho-social Skills ($r = 0.652$) show correlation coefficients exceeding the critical value. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected for these variables, indicating significant positive relationships with scholastic competence among female students. Overall, the findings lead to a partial rejection of Hypothesis No. 3. The results highlight that empathy and relationships, communication skills, thinking skills, stress management and overall psycho-social skills play a significant role in enhancing scholastic competence of female students at the secondary education level, while self-awareness and cognitive flexibility do not exhibit a statistically significant influence.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study clearly establish that psychosocial skills play a significant and nuanced role in determining the scholastic competence of secondary school students. The overall analysis (Hypothesis No. 1) reveals that all dimensions of psychosocial skills—namely self-awareness, empathy and relationships, communication skills, thinking skills, cognitive flexibility and stress management—are significantly and positively related to scholastic competence. The very high correlation of overall psychosocial skills with scholastic competence highlights that academic achievement at the secondary level is not merely a function of cognitive ability, but is strongly influenced by students' social, emotional and adaptive capacities. The gender-wise analysis further provides important insights. In the case of male students (Hypothesis No. 2), most psychosocial dimensions such as self-awareness, empathy and relationships, thinking skills, cognitive flexibility and overall psychosocial skills show significant relationships with scholastic competence, whereas communication skills and stress management do not emerge as significant contributors. This suggests that male students' academic competence is more closely linked with cognitive–social dimensions and interpersonal understanding than with emotional expression and stress regulation.

Conversely, the results for female students (Hypothesis No. 3) indicate a stronger and more comprehensive association between psychosocial skills and scholastic competence. Empathy and relationships, communication skills, thinking skills, stress management and overall psychosocial skills are all significantly related to scholastic competence among female students. However, self-awareness and cognitive flexibility do not show a significant relationship. Notably, stress management exhibits an exceptionally strong correlation with scholastic competence among female students, underscoring the critical role of emotional regulation and coping mechanisms in their academic functioning. Taken together, the findings lead to the conclusion that psychosocial skills are vital determinants of scholastic competence at the secondary education level, though their influence varies across gender and across specific dimensions. While overall psychosocial development consistently enhances academic competence for all students, empathy, communication and stress management emerge as particularly influential, especially for female students. The study thus reinforces the view that scholastic competence is a multidimensional construct shaped by emotional, social and behavioral factors alongside intellectual abilities.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of the study carry important implications for educational practice, curriculum design and policy formulation in secondary education. The significant relationship between overall psychosocial skills and scholastic competence highlights the need to move beyond an examination-oriented and content-heavy approach to education. Schools should systematically integrate psychosocial skill development within the secondary curriculum through social–emotional learning (SEL) activities, collaborative learning, group discussions, role-play and reflective practices. Teacher preparation and professional development programs should place greater emphasis on equipping teachers with strategies to foster empathy, effective communication, emotional regulation and stress management among students. Given the observed gender differences, psychosocial interventions should be designed with sensitivity to the distinct developmental needs of male and female students. Strengthening school counseling services and providing structured support for stress management can further enhance students' academic engagement and performance. At the policy level, the findings support the inclusion of psychosocial competencies as a core element of holistic education frameworks. Recognizing and nurturing psychosocial skills alongside academic instruction can lead to improved scholastic competence, healthier learning environments and more balanced personality development. Ultimately, the study underscores that fostering psychosocial skills is essential for preparing secondary school students not only for academic success but also for effective adjustment to the broader challenges of life.

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