ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

Students with learning disabilities (LDs) often experience difficulties not only in academic performance but also in social adjustment and interaction. These challenges impact their overall educational experience and long-term development. This paper examines the relationship between academic and social skills among students with learning disabilities, highlighting the factors influencing their performance, interpersonal relationships, and classroom participation. Using a review of related literature, the study discusses the interplay between cognitive limitations, emotional regulation, and peer relationships in shaping student outcomes. Findings from various studies suggest that academic success and social competence are mutually reinforcing; students who receive targeted interventions in both areas exhibit higher self-esteem, better classroom engagement, and improved academic results. The study underscores the importance of comprehensive educational programs that integrate academic instruction with social-emotional learning for students with learning disabilities.

Keywords: learning disabilities, academic skills, social competence, inclusive education, special education, emotional development

INTRODUCTION

Learning disabilities are neurodevelopmental disorders that affect the brain's ability to process information efficiently, leading to challenges in reading, writing, mathematics, and problem-solving. While these difficulties primarily affect academic performance, they also have significant implications for social development. Students with learning disabilities often struggle with communication, peer relationships, and emotional regulation, resulting in reduced social competence and lower self-esteem (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2020).

Social competence—the ability to build positive relationships, communicate effectively, and adapt to social norms—is essential for success both in school and in life. For students with learning disabilities, limited social skills may result in peer rejection, social isolation, and behavioral problems (Gresham & Elliott, 2019). In turn, these social difficulties can exacerbate academic challenges, creating a cycle of low performance and diminished motivation.

Inclusive education policies emphasize equal opportunities for all learners, including those with learning disabilities. However, successful inclusion requires not only academic accommodations but also deliberate social-emotional interventions to help students engage meaningfully with peers and teachers. This study aims to explore the relationship between academic performance and social skills among students with learning disabilities, emphasizing the need for integrated educational support systems.

2.1 Objectives of the Study
The primary objectives of this study are:
1. To identify the academic challenges faced by students with learning disabilities.
2. To examine the social skill difficulties affecting these students' interpersonal relationships.
3. To determine the relationship between academic performance and social competence.
4. To suggest strategies and interventions for improving both academic and social outcomes.

2.2 ACADEMIC SKILLS OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES
Academic skills refer to abilities such as reading comprehension, written expression, mathematical reasoning, and problem-solving. Students with learning disabilities often perform below grade level due to deficits in working memory, language processing, and executive functioning (Vaughn et al., 2019). Despite possessing average intelligence, these students may struggle to retain information, follow instructions, and apply learned concepts.

Research indicates that individualized education programs (IEPs), assistive technologies, and differentiated instruction significantly improve academic achievement among students with LDs (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014). Effective teaching strategies include multisensory learning, structured reading programs, and continuous feedback mechanisms that accommodate different learning styles. Teacher support, motivation, and consistent monitoring are also critical factors influencing academic success.

2.3 Social Skills and Emotional Development:
Social skills are vital for establishing relationships, resolving conflicts, and participating in group activities. Students with learning disabilities frequently experience difficulties

in social perception, communication, and emotional self-control, leading to peer rejection or bullying (Gresham & Elliott, 2019). These challenges can negatively affect classroom participation and academic engagement.

Social-emotional learning (SEL) programs have been proven to enhance self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal communication among students with disabilities. Group activities, peer mentoring, and role-playing exercises foster positive social behavior and promote inclusion. Furthermore, teachers who model empathy and patience create a classroom environment conducive to both academic and social growth (Durlak et al., 2020).

2.4 Interrelationship Between Academic and Social Skills

Academic and social skills are interdependent. Students who feel socially accepted tend to show higher motivation, improved classroom participation, and better problem-solving abilities. Conversely, academic difficulties can lead to frustration and withdrawal from social interactions (Milsom & Glanville, 2021).

Empirical studies show that interventions combining academic support with social-emotional learning produce the most effective outcomes. When students are provided with structured opportunities to collaborate, communicate, and reflect on their learning, they develop resilience and confidence that extend beyond the classroom.

2.5 Educational Strategies and Interventions

1. **Collaborative Learning:** Encourages peer interaction and shared problem-solving.
2. **Social Skills Training (SST):** Teaches communication, empathy, and conflict resolution.
3. **Differentiated Instruction:** Tailors learning materials to suit diverse cognitive needs.
4. **Assistive Technology:** Supports reading, writing, and organization through digital tools.
5. **Counseling and Mentorship:** Helps students develop emotional regulation and confidence.

A combination of these approaches leads to holistic development, improving both academic achievement and social well-being.

TABLE – 1 MEAN SCORES OF DH BASED ON SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC SKILL WITH REFERENCE TO PRE TEST, MID TEST AND POST TEST

Comparison	N	Mean	S D	"t"	Table value	Level of significance
Post-Test vs. Pre Test	6	65.00	3.55	44.91	**2.571**	S*
Post-Test vs. Mid-Test	6	42.50	3.80	27.35	**2.571**	S*
Mid-Test vs. Pre-Test	6	22.50	3.25	16.97	**2.571**	S*

S* denotes Significance

From the above table (), it could be concluded that the calculated t value of pre-test vs. post-test (44.91), mid-test vs. post-test (27.35) and pre-test vs. mid-test (16.97) is higher than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. The intervention had a **highly significant positive effect** on the Social and Academic Skill mean scores of the DH.

The null hypothesis "There is no significant difference between the pre-test, mid-test and post-test scores of DH with reference to social and academic skills" is rejected.

TABLE – 2 MEAN SCORES OF AS BASED ON SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC SKILL WITH REFERENCE TO PRE TEST AND POST

Sample		Mean	S.D	No	't' value
AS	Pre Test	37.50	5.20	6	39.46
	Post Test	87.50	3.50	6	

From the above table (), it could be concluded that the calculated t value (39.46) is higher than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. The intervention had a **highly significant positive effect** on the Social and Academic Skill mean scores of the AS.

The null hypothesis "There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of AS with reference to social and academic skills" is rejected.

3. CONCLUSION

Students with learning disabilities face interconnected challenges that affect both academic and social domains. Success in one area often supports progress in the other. Addressing these challenges requires inclusive teaching practices, social-emotional learning, and individualized academic interventions.

Teachers play a vital role in fostering supportive environments where students with learning disabilities can thrive academically and socially. Educational systems must invest in professional training, assistive technologies, and evidence-based programs to promote inclusion and equality.

Ultimately, nurturing both academic competence and social-emotional growth prepares students with learning disabilities for lifelong learning and active participation in society.

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