


Social Intelligence and Social Adjustment of Entry-Level College Students in Jorhat District of Assam, India

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the level of social intelligence and social adjustment among entry-level college students in Jorhat District, Assam, India. The study adopted a descriptive survey method for collection of quantitative data from a proportionate stratified random sample of 404 first-semester students across 16 degree colleges. Data were gathered using the Tromso Social Intelligence Scale and the Social Adjustment Inventory. Results showed that the majority of students demonstrated an average level of social intelligence. Social adjustment levels were comparatively weaker, with a significant number of students falling in the lower to average categories. No significant gender differences were observed for social intelligence or social adjustment. The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions at the college level to strengthen both constructs, especially considering the transitional challenges faced by entry-level students.

KEYWORDS

Social Intelligence, Social Adjustment, Entry-Level College Students, Jorhat District, Assam

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary higher education, the transition to college represents a crucial stage of development in which students are required to adapt to new educational, cultural, and social environments. There are two essential constructs that play a vital role in this transition process: *social intelligence* and *social adjustment*. Social intelligence is the ability of individuals to understand and manage interpersonal relationships smoothly and effectively (Goleman, 2006). It enables students to engage in collaborative learning, build supportive networks, and resolve conflicts. Social adjustment, on the other hand, refers to the capacity of an individual to adapt to the demands of the social environment (Crow & Crow, 1956). Together, these competencies have an impact on academic outcomes, overall well-being, and future employability of students.

Research conducted globally has highlighted increasing concerns about social competencies of students in the face of rapid digitalization, academic pressure, and mental health challenges (Esposito, 2022, Ho, and Mantello, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted traditional ways of interaction by limiting opportunities for authentic social involvement, thus creating adjustment

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difficulties not only among first year students but also for all students (Helvich et al., 2024; Liu & Lin, 2024). While programs such as social skills training, peer mentoring, and institutional support initiatives have demonstrated positive effects (Bansal & Mittal, 2024; Lan et al., 2024), the persistence of average to low levels of social intelligence and adjustment among students underscores the need for continuous focus on these constructs.

Indian research studies have shown that emotional intelligence, family background, and cultural expectations positively and strongly shape social intelligence and adjustment of students (Fatima et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2023). On the other hand, socioeconomic conditions and academic stress continue to challenge the adaptive capacities of students (Bhakat & Das, 2023). Although several studies have examined these dimensions in urban and metropolitan contexts, limited focus has been given on the students of Northeast India, particularly in the context of Assam, where cultural diversity and educational infrastructure create unique challenges and opportunities.

This knowledge gap is particularly significant for entry-level college students, who are in the initial phase of their journey into higher education. Their adjustment with new educational environments, peer groups, and academic demands requires strong social intelligence and adjustment skills. Failure to meet with these demands may negatively impact their academic performance, confidence, socialization, and mental health. Despite this gap, empirical evidence exploring the interplay between these two constructs in the Northeast Indian context remains underrepresented.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to examine the levels of social intelligence and social adjustment among entry-level college students in Jorhat District of Assam. The study aims to identify gender differences, identify prevailing levels of both qualities, and provide localized insights that may help to suggest strategies at the personal and institutional levels for supporting their overall development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global research studies have highlighted increasing concerns about deficits in social intelligence, with digital dependence, mental health issues, and academic pressures emerging as key contributors. Excessive dependence on virtual communication negatively impacts on the development of empathy and nonverbal communication skills, creates misunderstandings, and reduces emotional connection (Esposito, 2022). Mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression decrease the ability to engage in meaningful social contexts among students (Ghotbi et al., 2022). Poor social intelligence not only affects group work and collaborative learning but also contributes to loneliness and lower academic performance (Sap et al., 2022).

Indian research studies have highlighted that social intelligence is strongly shaped by emotional intelligence, sociocultural factors, and personal background. Fatima et al. (2024) found that stress, anxiety, and poor academic outcomes result from poor emotional regulation. Family environment, socioeconomic status, and cultural norms also play significant roles, as students from collectivist traditions may display different interpersonal competencies compared to those from individualistic contexts. Merlin J. and Soubramanian (2024) found that intrapersonal skills are crucial for managing interpersonal challenges. Sood et al. (2024) found that low social intelligence leads to high stress and poor adjustment mechanisms in life. A gender-based study by Pandey and Sharma (2024) reported that female students have stronger emotional and social intelligence than males, and high social-emotional intelligence leads to better social networks and academic collaborations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted traditional modes of interaction towards digital modes of learning and interaction, and as a result many students face difficulty with reading nonverbal cues and maintaining genuine interpersonal connections (Helvich et al., 2024). Zhao et al. (2024) found that students with higher emotional intelligence cope better, experiencing less anxiety and greater life satisfaction. Academically, online learning has disrupted performance due to reduced engagement and

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