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## A Study of Interpersonal Skills among Higher Education Students

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*Interpersonal skills play a vital role in an individual's personal and professional life. It helps to understand, interact, communicate and manage according to situation effectively. The present study aimed to explore interpersonal skills among higher education students on the basis of various demographic variables such as gender, academic stream, and locality. For which 349 higher education students enrolled in various programmes at Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal university, Uttarakhand, were chosen by using stratified random sampling technique. A descriptive survey research approach was adopted and the data was collected by using self-constructed scale by the researcher. The gathered data was analysed by using SPSS software and MS Excel. The findings revealed that there found no significant difference among higher education students on the basis of gender and academic stream, whereas statistically significant difference was present with respect to the locality among higher education students.*

**Keywords:** *Interpersonal Skills, Communication, Capabilities, Higher Education Students.*

### **INTRODUCTION:**

In the present era, interpersonal skills have been identified as a necessary requirement for Success in social academic and professional life. Interpersonal skills are an individual's abilities to interact, communicate, understand, manage, maintain or build relationships effectively. Interpersonal skills are known as the capabilities that enable individuals to interact with others through effective communication (Ferris, Witt & Hochwarter, 2001). It consists a broad range of abilities that enable individuals to interact effectively with others in different social, academic and professional settings. Communication, teamwork, leadership and conflict management are listed as key interpersonal skills assessment and competency framework used in organisational and educational research (National research council, 2011). In the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century education system prioritised development of

skills among students so they can adapt to evolving academic and societal requirements. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also highlights the need of equipping students with 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies such as collaboration, critical thinking, communication, creativity etc. to prepare them for real world challenges. University offers various engaging programmes, presentations, seminars, projects, group discussions and extracurricular activities that provide an environment for students to interact with others. These skills also contribute in building self-confidence, leadership capabilities and emotional stability, which are vital for achieving success academically and professionally (Klinkosz, et al, 2021).

For students studying in universities or higher education programmes, development of these abilities is quite essential as they impact their participation in class, collaboration with peers and others, for academic success and overall personal as well as professional development. Institutions of higher education aim not only to serve academic knowledge but also to prepare students for their better future. Students who own strong interpersonal skills, express their ideas effectively, perform better in team, handle situations more efficiently and have better interactions. Researchers also highlights that such skills are related to better team performance with great effectiveness in academic and professional settings, as they help collaboration, communication and relationship building that facilitate sustained success.

**Ahirrao, (2023)** investigated the gender differences in social skills of adolescents aged 15–18 years, using a sample of 441 junior college students. Social Competence Scale was used for data collection to examined gender differences in interpersonal adequacy, communication skills, personal adequacy, and overall social skills using the t-test. The study found no significant gender differences in interpersonal adequacy, communication skills, and overall social skills of adolescents. However, the significant difference was found among adolescents in their personal adequacy.

**Mishra and Kumari, (2025)** assessed interpersonal communication skills' role in academic performance among 111 university students enrolled at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. The data was collected through questionnaire and inventory on communication skill. the findings revealed that majority students exhibit moderate level communication competence. Also demonstrates significant association between communication skills and academic performance.

**Michael Jeya Priya and Gnana Kamali (2020)** explored the interpersonal skills of Triunelveli district's college students. Researchers employed a self-constructed scale on 300 students to collect the data. After the statistical analysis the findings showed significant difference between college students with respect to their gender, family type in their interpersonal skills. whereas no significant difference was found with respect to their locality, social media user or non-user for interpersonal skills.

In the context of Indian higher education, studies on interpersonal skills among higher

education students are still limited, especially in regional and rural localities. Exploring interpersonal skills within this context can offer meaningful insights into how students interact with others. The present study focuses on examining the interpersonal skill of higher education students in relation to selected demographic variables.

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

- To explore the interpersonal skills of higher education students with respect to their gender (male and female), academic stream (arts and science) and locality (rural and urban).

**HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY:**

- There is no significant difference between male and female higher education students for their interpersonal skills.
- There is no significant difference between arts and science stream higher education students for their interpersonal skills.
- There is no significant difference between rural and urban higher education students for their interpersonal skills.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

- **Method:** A quantitative research approach was employed to conduct the study.
- **Population and Sample:** The population for this study consisted students enrolled in higher education programmes at Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University, Srinagar Garhwal, Uttarakhand, India. Among the whole population, 349 students were chosen as the sample by using stratified random sampling technique.
- **Tool used:** For assessing the interpersonal skills of the higher education students, researcher developed an interpersonal skills scale consisting 55 items under four dimensions namely communication skill, collaboration skill, problem solving skill and conflict resolution skill. Which was based on 5-point Likert scale.
- **Statistical techniques used:** Descriptive and inferential statistic was used to analyse the collected data. With the help of MS Excel and SPSS software, mean, standard deviation and t-values were calculated.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:**

**Table 1: Demographic profile of total respondents.**

Total Respondents					
Gender	N (%)	Stream	N (%)	Locality	N (%)
Male	158 (45.27%)	Arts	172 (49.28%)	Rural	213 (61.03%)
Female	191 (54.73%)	Science	177 (50.72%)	Urban	136 (38.97%)
Total	349 (100%)	Total	349 (100%)	Total	349 (100%)

Fig 1(a,b,c): Representation of demographic profile.

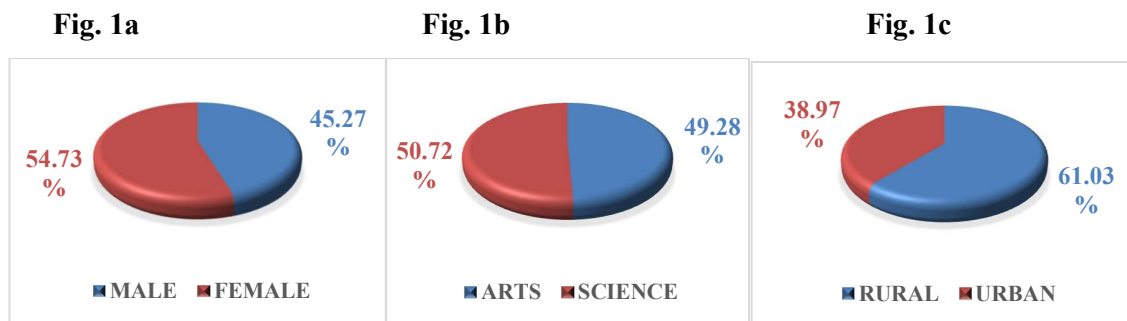


Table 1 & fig. 1(a,b,c) shows the demographic profile of all 349 higher education students as the respondents involved in the study. Among all 349 higher education students, 158 were male and 191 were female respondents with the percentage of 45.27 and 54.73 respectively. Similarly, on the basis of academic stream, out of 349 respondents, 172 were from arts stream and 177 were from science stream with 49.28% and 50.72% respectively. Further, 213 respondents were from rural locality and 136 were from urban locality with the percentage of 61.03 and 38.97 respectively.

Table 2: Analysis of Interpersonal Skills among Higher Education Student.

Demographic Variables	Category	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	P-Value	T-Value	Significance
Gender	Male	158	206.38	19.227	347	0.382	0.876	NS
	Female	191	204.66	17.322				
Stream	Arts	172	204.40	18.492	347	0.293	1.052	NS
	Science	177	206.45	17.911				
Locality	Rural	213	206.97	18.378	347	0.049	1.974	S
	Urban	136	203.04	17.726				

0.05 level of significance

Fig. 2: Representation of mean & SD of interpersonal skills on the basis on gender, academic stream and locality.

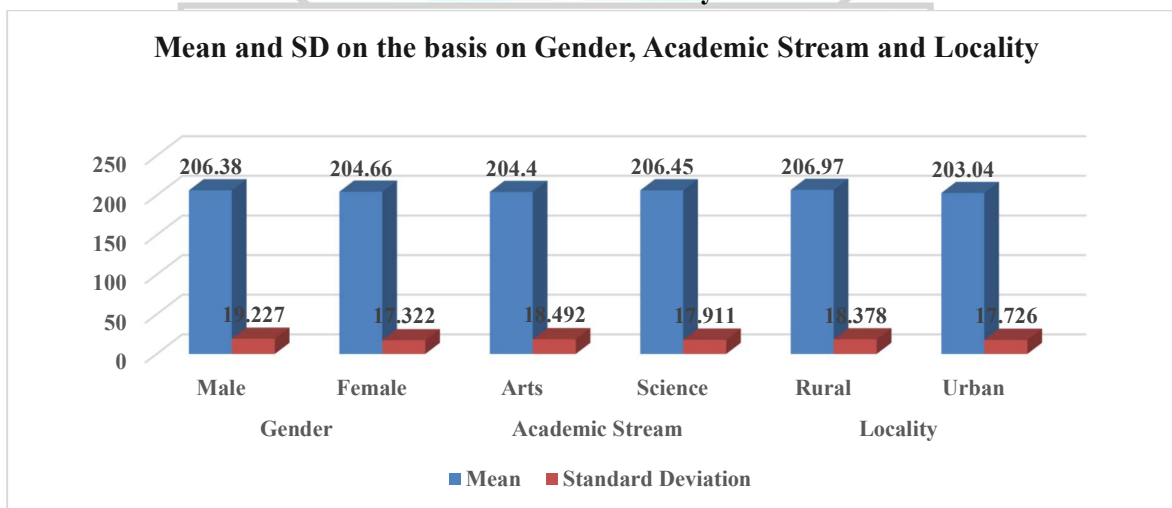


Table & fig. 2 inferred the description of selected demographic variables namely gender, academic stream and locality of total 349 higher education students. The table shows that male higher education students show higher mean score (206.38) and standard deviation (19.227), than the female students' mean score (204.66) and standard deviation (17.322). and calculated t value (0.876) is less than the critical t value 1.966 at 0.05 level with the degree of freedom 347. Which inferred that the difference is not significant with respect to gender of higher education students. On the basis of academic stream of higher education students, science stream higher education students show higher mean score (206.45), than mean score (204.40) of arts streams students. Although, arts students showed more standard deviation (18.492) than science stream students (17.911). Further, the calculated t value 1.052, is less than the critical t value 1.96 with 0.05 level with degree of freedom 347. Which indicate that the difference in interpersonal skills of students on the basis of academic stream is statistically not significant. Similarly, students of rural locality have higher mean (206.97) and standard deviation (18.378), than the mean (203.04) and standard deviation (17.726) of urban students. Since, the calculated t value 1.974 is higher than the critical t value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance at degree of freedom 347. Hence, the difference in interpersonal skills of higher education students on the basis of their locality is statistically significant.

#### **FINDINGS:**

The findings of the study are as follows:

- The null hypothesis, which states that 'there is no significant difference between male and female higher education students for their interpersonal skills', is failed to reject.
- The null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between arts stream and science stream higher education students for their interpersonal skills', is failed to reject.
- The null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between rural and urban locality higher education students for their interpersonal skills', is rejected.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

The study revealed that there found no significant difference in interpersonal skills of higher education students with respect to their gender (male or female) and academic stream (arts or science). This result of the present study is consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Ahirrao, K. D. (2023) on gender differences in social skills. However, significant difference observed in interpersonal skills on the basis of locality (rural or urban) among higher education students. The result aligns with the study of Rajesh, V. R. and Chandrasekharan, V. (2013).

#### **SUGGESTIONS:**

The results of the study demonstrate the need for universities to integrate various academic programmes for interpersonal skill development among higher education students. Moreover, structured interventions such as workshops, activities related to various skill and collaborative learning

environment can strengthen interpersonal skill among students. The study can be conducted on the other areas, population and with other research approaches such as qualitative or mixed method approach etc.

#### CONCLUSION:

The study concludes that interpersonal skills were assessed on the basis of selected demographic variables such as gender, academic stream and locality of higher education students. Variations highlighted the need for support and inclusive strategies that address the diverse needs of students within higher education institutions to promote interpersonal skills fostering interpersonal skills can be specifically beneficial for students social academic and prospective professional development.

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