



The Role of Social Skills in the Academic Performance of De La Salle Araneta University Freshmen Students: Creating a Culture

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Abstract: This paper aims to explore the following: (a) the academic performance of the students in Sociology; (b) the assessed social skills of the students as to cooperation, assertiveness, empathy and self-control; (c) and if there is a significant relationship between social skills and academic performance in Sociology. In 2012, data were collected from 103 first year students with Sociology subjects at De La Salle Araneta University using the social Skills Rating System (SSRS). A simple correlation study was performed to determine if there is a significant relationship between the two variables. When correlation between social skills and academic performance was tested, only self-control and overall social skills show significant relationship with academic performance. It is worth noting that the generability of these results is limited to first year college students. It is possible that social skills have particularly high relationship with academic performance in their critical years of transition from high school to college. It is also recommended to study the influence of Cultural background of respondents in their academic performance.

Key Words: social skills; academic performance; Social Skills Rating System.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Importance of Social Skills

For the young Filipino, acquiring a college education is imperative to securing a good job in the future (Buena, 2006). During college years, it is expected of them to: (1) fully develop his/her self — acquiring full knowledge of one's growth changes (physical, psychological, emotional, social), building self-esteem and confidence, and maintaining healthy relationships with parents and peers; (2) undergo skill-building particularly critical and analytical thinking, firm decision-making, leadership; (3) be fully aware of social, political, economic and cultural issues and have the corresponding concerns; and (4) be active in community and political affairs (Cabigon, 1999).

In general, social skills maybe defined as socially acceptable learned behaviors that enable a

person to interact with others in ways that elicit positive responses and assist in avoiding negative responses (Gresham & Elliot, 1990; Elliot & Demaray 2001). The development of social skills is one of the most important outcomes of the school process. Children with social skills deficit are at risk for social-emotional difficulties and poor academic performances (Parker and Asher, 1987).

Specifically, to be successful in school, students need to learn not only academic content, but also how to acquire academic content through classroom discourse (Westby, 1997; Sung, 2009) room discourse involves interaction with teachers and peers, and is based on a procedural knowledge of social participation structure in which, according to Westby (1997), information sources are relayed or withheld, and communicative rights are allocated among the participating members (Sung, 2009).

This study focuses on three aspects: (a) the academic performance of the students in Sociology; (b) the assessed social skills of the students as to



cooperation, assertiveness, empathy and self-control; (c) and if there is a significant relationship between social skills and academic performance in Sociology.

The investigator hypothesized that there is no significant difference between academic performances in Sociology of the first year level students of De La Salle Araneta University (DLSAU) and their social skills on the extent of assertiveness, cooperation, empathy and self-control.

What are Social skills?

What are the social skills teachers expect from students in the classroom? Lane, Pierson, and Givner (2003) conducted a research that investigated the social skills on which teachers place importance by surveying 366 teachers from kindergarten through high school in three Southern California school districts. Their findings showed that cooperation (e.g., “attends to your instructions,” “finishes class assignments within time limits,” “ignores peers distractions when doing class work”) and self-control (e.g., “controls temper in conflict situations with peers,” “responds appropriately to peer pressure,” “receives criticism well”), were the skills teachers considered significantly more critical than assertion skill (e.g., “invites others to join in activities,” “appropriately questions rules that may be unfair”). Of the total 30 items of the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS; Gresham & Elliott, 1990, as cited in Lane et al., 2003) that teachers rated for the importance in their study, the items that teachers across all school levels agreed upon as significantly important are two items (“follows directions” and “attends to your instructions”) out of 10 cooperation items, and three items (“controls temper in conflict situations with peers,” “controls temper in conflict situations with adults,” and “appropriately responds to physical aggression from peers”) out of 10 self-control items (Sung, 2009).

The acronym of CARES has been offered by Gresham and Elliott (1990) to facilitate memory for, and the identification of, five major clusters of social skills. The clusters are cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy and self-control. Briefly, these clusters of social behaviors can be characterized as follows: (1) Cooperation- behavior such as helping others, sharing materials with a

peer and complying with rules; (2) Assertion- initiating behaviors such as asking others for information and behaviors that are responses to others' actions such as responding to peer pressure; (3) Responsibility- behaviors that demonstrate the ability to communicate with adults and concern about one's property; (4) Empathy- behaviors that show concern for a peer's or significant adult's feelings; (5) Self-control- behaviors that emerge in conflict situations such as responding appropriately to teasing or to corrective feedback from an adult (Elliott & Busse 1991).

The SSRS (Gresham & Elliott, 1990) is a multi-component social skill rating system aimed at behaviors that affect parent-child relations, teacher-student relations, and peer acceptance (Merrell, 2001). The primary advantage of the SSRS is that it is an integrated multi-component system of instruments for use by teachers, parents, and students. The manual is very well written, and the rating instruments are easy to understand and use (Merrell, 2001).

This is a system that evaluates several specific facets grouped into three scales: social competence, behavior problems and academic competence, factors that have been considered in existing literature as relevant to the process of social adaptation and maladjustment. Items focus on positive behaviors and social skills, including the use of efficient social skills, the absence of behavioral problems and the existence of age appropriate social cognition. On the other hand, there is the issue of assessing problematic behavior and academic competence (Mota, Matos, & Lemos, 2011).

Several researchers have established a direct relationship between social skills and academic functioning (Bursuch & Asher, 1986; Coie & Krehbiel, 1984; Elliott, 1993, 1995; Malecki & Elliott, 1999; Elliott, Malecki & Demaray, 2001). Differences in social skills functioning between students with learning disabilities and those without disabilities have been found to be as large as 2 standard deviations. Similar results are found for the differences between students with high-incidence disabilities and peers without disabilities (Gresham, Elliott, & Black, 1987; Gresham & Reschly, 1987). Other investigators have reported significant relations between teacher-rated social skills and direct observations of academic time-on-



task or engaged time and academic responding (Eisert, Walker, Severson, Black, & Todis, 1987; Elliott, Gresham, Freeman, & McCloskey, 1988). Thus, there is a strong and consistent support for a relation (as evidence by moderate to high correlations) between academic achievement and social skills functioning. However, until recently there has been less published evidence that social skills have a direct causal effect on academic achievement (Elliot, Malecki & Demaray, 2001).

Through positive interactions with peers during academic activities, students develop cognitive and problem-solving ability (Webb, 1989); through their antisocial behavior, students are isolated from classroom activities and lose opportunities for the social exchange of academic information (Wentzel, 1993). Social skills are strategies and tactics required in daily life to effectively interact with other people (Walker, Schwarz, Nippold, Irvin, & Noell, 1994; Sung, 2009). Thus, when a child's social skills are deemed effective, he or she is considered to have social competence and predicted to be successful in school (Walker et al., 1994; Sung, 2009).

One of the key studies that best illustrates that students' prosocial classroom behaviors have a direct, causal effect on their academic achievement (as operationalized by grades or standardized test scores) was conducted by Wentzel (1993). Wentzel believed that there were several viable ways that a student's social conduct could affect his or her academic achievement. For example, she hypothesized that a students' classroom behavior might influence a teacher's preferences for students and, in the process, impact the quality of instructional exchanges. She also hypothesized that behaving responsibly directly and independently might contribute to academic achievement, even when other factors (e.g., IQ, family structure, ethnicity) were taken into account (Elliot, et al, 2001).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Participants

The sample population consisted of 103 students from first year level at De La Salle Araneta University who are enrolled in Sociology subject of the investigator.

Due to their small number, computation for the sample population was no longer computed, instead they were all taken and interviewed.

2.2 Instrument

The Social Skills Rating Systems (SSRS) (Gresham & Elliott, 1990) is a nationally standardized series of questionnaires in U.S. setting that obtain information on the social behaviors of children and adolescents (aged 13-18 years) from teachers, parents, and the students themselves. Each questionnaire takes 10-25 minutes to complete. Items on each scale are rated according to perceived frequency and importance. There are three scales. The Social Skills Scale measures positive social behaviors: cooperation, empathy, assertion, and self-control. The problem Behaviors Scales measures behaviors that can interfere with the development of positive social skills: externalizing problems (e.g., aggressive acts and poor temper control), internalizing problems (e.g., sadness and anxiety) and hyperactivity (e.g., fidgeting and impulsive acts). The Academic Functioning Scale provides a quick estimate of academic functioning.

In this study, the same instrument was used but it only obtained information from freshmen students of DLSAU. The scale being measured was limited to positive social behaviors: cooperation, assertiveness, empathy and self-control.

2.3 Procedures

Data were collected from 3 classes of freshmen students of De La Salle Araneta University taking up Sociology subject as their minor subject. At the time of administration, the general objective of the research was presented. Standard instructions were provided on how to complete the questionnaires, emphasizing the confidentiality of all information provided as well as the voluntary nature of participation in the research. No time limit was set.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Frequency of social skills surveyed from first year students from De La Salle Araneta



University who were enrolled with Sociology subject under the investigator.

Table 1. Ranking of pro-social skills of students

Social Skills	Items	Mean	Rank
Cooperation(C)	10	2.45	2
Assertiveness(A)	9	2.11	4
Empathy(E)	10	2.53	1
Self-control(S)	10	2.35	3

** Correlation is significant at 0.01

In calculating for the value of the four dimensions in terms of frequency, the values vary between 2.53-2.11 as shown in table 1. Among the social skills surveyed, students most often use empathy, followed by cooperation, self-control, assertiveness. Examples of empathy questions are illustrated in table 2.

Table 2. Items on empathy.

Social Skills	How often		
	0	1	2
I say nice things to others when they have done something well.			
I try to understand how my friends feel when they are angry, upset or sad.			
I ask friends for help with my problems.			
I feel sorry for others when bad things happen to them.			
I listen to my friends when they talk about problems they are having.			
I tell other people when they have done something well.			
I smile, no, wave at others.			
I let friends know I Like them by telling or showing them.			
I stand up for my friends when they are unfairly criticized.			
I talk things over with classmates when there is a problem or an argument.			

* 0= never ; 1= sometimes ; 2= very often

However, there is an adequate moderately

correlation among the social skills used by the students as indicated by Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation among social skills domain

	A total	E total	S total
C total	.312**	.579**	.637**
A total		.410**	.499**
E total			.547**

** Correlation is significant at 0.01

Table 4 shows that despite the use of social skills by the students, most students have only an average mean of 72.2716 as to their academic performance.

Table 4 Academic Performance of students in Sociology based on DLSAU grading system.

Grade	F	Valid %	Mean	SD
Passed	4	4.0	56.7950	3.27423
Good	41	40.6	67.4173	3.14392
VG	56	55.4	76.9311	3.53669
Total	101	100.0	72.2716	6.52342

When correlation between social skills and academic performance was tested, cooperation, assertiveness and empathy show no significant relationship but self-control and overall social skills show significant relationship with academic performance (Table 5), although the assumption was that there is a high and direct relationship between social skills and academic performance.

Table 5. Relationship between the social skill survey and the academic performance.

Domains	Chi-Square Value	P-value



C	2.199	.333	Accept
A	2.416	.660	Accept
E	4.930	.295	Accept
S	11.537	.021	Reject
Overall	10.621	.005	Reject

The error in the correlation may be an indication that there may be a problem in the assessment of performance. Hence a further factor analysis can be conducted. In fact, the syllabus on Sociology when presented in class or during the instruction period, failed to emphasize and use the social skills as criterion of achievement. Besides, the measurement of academic performance should be on raw scores criterion.

4. CONCLUSIONS

According to Wentzel, students' prosocial behavior were independent predictors of students' GPA's (grade point average) and that prosocial behavior was an independent predictors of Stanford Test of Basic skills (STBS) scores. Students' prosocial behavior in the classroom has a direct and a statistically significant effect on their GPA's (Elliot, et.al., 2011).

It is essential to note that adolescents do not react the same way to different situations and the perception of adolescents also varies within the same situation. The existing research on classroom social behavior and academic achievement measured in a variety of ways indicates that students' prosocial behaviors affect teachers' behavior and students' own actual achievements.

Like medications, social skills do not make students smarter or more knowledgeable, but they help prepare students to use learning skills and knowledge they have to demonstrate achievement (Elliott, Malecki, Demaray, 2001). It seems clear that prosocial behaviors in the classroom can have a value beyond facilitating social relationship with other people: Prosocial behaviors also impact a student's academic achievement. Second, the influence of students' prosocial behaviors on academic achievement is at least twofold: Prosocial behaviors directly impact achievement and impact a range of academic preparatory behaviors such as listening to directions, staying on task, and asking

questions. In general, it appears that prosocial behaviors function as academic enablers, which increase engagement in learning.

It is worth noting that the generalizability of these results is limited to first-year college students. It is possible that social skills have a particularly high relationship with academic performance in their critical years of transition from high school to college but may weaken as they adjust to their new school environment or the other way around. This is something that the researchers can explore further.

Finally, the results of the present study are important in that much of the previous research linking social skills with academic performance has been conducted with foreign settings. This study bolsters the relationship between social skills and academic performance in the Philippine college setting. Additional research on this area is also of critical importance if we are to understand the extent of importance of social skills in helping students succeed at school.

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