



## A Comparison of Emotional Intelligence, Social Competence and its Components in Student with and Without Learning Disability

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this study was to compare the emotional intelligence, social competence and its components in student with and without learning disabilities. The statistical population of this research included all students with and without learning disabilities second and third grade in Ahvaz city during the academic year of 2012-2013. The research subjects consisted of 66 students with learning disabilities selected by simple random sampling and 66 normal students matched (on grade and socioeconomic status). To collect data, Questionnaires emotional intelligence Bar-on and Parker and the Social Competency Inventory Cohen and Rosmen were used. The results of multivariate of variance showed that there is a significant difference between students with and without learning disability in term of emotional intelligence, social competence and its components. In addition, the mentioned variables and its components in students with learning disability lower than normal students.

**Key Words:** Learning Disability, Emotional Intelligence and Social Competence

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### INTRODUCTION

There are many students in schools who suffer from severe difficulties in learning despite having no physical or emotional problem. These students usually enjoy a medium or high level of intelligence; however, they show poorer school performance than other students in almost same educational environment and in spite of being in a good educational environment and having no significant biological damage and serious social and mental problem, they are not able to learn in certain areas (reading, writing, and calculation).

The topic of students with learning problems is not new, but the concept of learning disabilities has a short history. According to Brown [1], learning disabilities refer to those central neural system disorders that influence a wide range of academic and functional skills. The revised fourth edition of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-IV-IR) [2] has divided learning disabilities into four categories which include dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, and not otherwise specified (NOS).

Learning disabilities create social, emotional, and academic problems for students [3]. These students have little ability in understanding non-verbal aspects of language and have problems in social cognitive function which needs an understanding of situational signals and goals, and involvement in social interactions [4]. Various studies have examined the academic barriers for students with learning disabilities and considered, among others, lack of appropriate academic skills or proper academic strategies, emotional and social problems, and decrease of academic achievement as the academic barriers for these students in higher educational levels [5].

One of the characteristics of students with learning disabilities is deficit in emotional intelligence. According to Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, cited by Maktabi [6], emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and recognize the concepts and meanings of emotions, the relationships between them, reasoning about them, and problem-solving on them, which leads to emotional development. Students with learning disabilities often have trouble interpreting what others say, do, and express [7]. Interpersonal perception of students with learning disabilities is very self-oriented and less influenced by others' opinions, and some of their misbehaviors are due to their lack of understanding of others [8].

Among other characteristics of students with learning disabilities compared with students without learning disabilities (normal students) is deficit in social competence. Social competence is the ability to organize and maintain one's personal and environmental skills [9]. Rubin and Rose-Krasnor [10] consider social competence as the ability to achieve personal goals in social interaction while simultaneously maintaining positive relationships with others over time and across situations. Brown [1] believes that social skills form the basis for social competence. Studies show that the existence of social skills deficits in students with learning disabilities is evident. These deficits can have devastating effects on all aspects of an individual's life, which only further hinders students' perceptions of themselves and their abilities [11]. Conte and Andrews [12] by examining social skills of

children with learning disabilities concluded that 75 percent of these children have deficits in social skills. The results of Morris [13] showed that although students with learning disabilities have desires to make friendship with their peers, they are unable to establish and maintain friendships as effortlessly as their peers without disabilities.

Students with learning disabilities often have trouble perceiving them and are unable to ask clear questions and express the barriers to their needs, which leads to interpersonal and self-control problems [14]. Within special education for these students, there is a pressing need for the implementation of evidence-based preventive interventions to reduce children's risk of developing maladaptive behaviors and enhance children's social and emotional competence [15]. Special education should fight these students' experiences of failure and the first step to help this group of students is to know their characteristics and deficiencies.

The existing literature on children with learning disabilities mainly focuses on the academic and learning problems of these students. Accordingly, the interventions and remedial instructions have been developed based on the same problems and the social and emotional needs of these students have seldom been considered. Moreover, due to the high prevalence of learning disabilities among students, the role of dimensions of emotional intelligence and social competence as the key factors in academic and social success, health promotion, and decrease of psychological problems in children with learning disabilities as well as the limitations and lack of coherence in previous studies on this area, and finally the application of the results of this study in pathology of those suffering from learning disabilities are among the most important necessities of this research. Thus, the importance and sensitivity of the research topic motivated the researcher to compare emotional intelligence and social competence in students with and without learning disabilities.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Hypotheses

1. There is a significant difference between elementary students with and without learning disabilities in terms of emotional intelligence and its components (intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, adaptability, and general mood).

2. There is a significant difference between elementary students with and without learning disability in terms of social competence and its components (Interest-Participation vs. Apathy-Withdrawal, and Cooperation-Compliance vs. Anger-Defiance).

### Population, Sample, and Sampling Method

The present study is of ex post facto type. The population includes all 2nd and 3rd grade students of elementary schools in the county of Ahvaz studying in the academic year 2012-13. Using simple random sampling, 2nd and 3rd grade students (66 students) were selected from among all students with learning disabilities referred to three special education centers for learning disabilities in the academic year 2012-13 in Ahvaz (it should be noted that these students have not received any interventions from these centers and are in the waiting list for receiving intervention in September/October 2013). Matching (based on educational grade and social-economic status) and simple random techniques were also used for the sampling of normal students. Emotional intelligence and social competence questionnaires were then given to be completed.

### Research Tool

Two tools were used to assess the variables.

1. The Bar-on Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth version (EQ-i: YV).
2. Kohn Social Competence Scale (SCS).

### Emotional Quotient Inventory, Youth Version (EQ-i: YV)

Emotional Quotient Inventory, Youth Version (EQ-i: YV) Bar-On and Parker [16] was used in the present study to measure emotional intelligence. This inventory, which evaluates emotional intelligence of children from 7 to 18 years of age, is a self-report tool, has 60 items, its items are rated on a Likert scale from Most of the Times (4) to Seldom (1) and it assesses five components (intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management, general mood). Bar-On and Parker [16] reported the reliability of Emotional Quotient Inventory of children and teenagers to be between 0.65 and 0.90 using Cronbach's alpha for different subscales and between 0.77 and 0.89 using test-retest method. The reported correlation between the short and long forms of this questionnaire ranged from 0.92 to 0.97, which is high correlation. Its construct validity examined by a factor analysis indicates the internal consistency of this tool. Conducting the factor analysis, five subscales were obtained for this tool. The internal correlation of the range of scores was lower than the mean (0.16 to 0.72) which shows that factors are rather discrete [16]. In this research, the reliability coefficients of questionnaire were estimated to be 0.68 using Cronbach's alpha and its validity was assessed to be adequate using confirmative factor analysis.

### Kohn Social Competence Scale (SCS)

Social Competence Scale was developed by Kohn and Rosman [17] in two forms of 73-item and 64-item. Later it was standardized for elementary school children by Morag [18] and its items were reduced to 44. Items of

this scale are rated from “Always” (5) to “Never” (1). Since each question evaluates two opposite poles, some questions have positive and some have negative value and evaluate the two factors (Interest-Participation vs. Apathy-Withdrawal and Cooperation-Compliance vs. Anger-Defiance). Kohn and Rosman [17] reported the reliability of the first factor to be 0.93 and that of the second one to be 0.95. The inter-rater reliability was 0.95 for cooperation-compliance vs. anger-defiance factor and 0.94 for interest-participation vs. apathy-withdrawal factor. The reliability coefficients of this questionnaire were estimated to be 0.76 for the first factor and 0.69 for the second one using Cronbach’s alpha. Its validity was assessed to be adequate using confirmative factor analysis. Factor loadings in the subscale of cooperation-compliance vs. anger-defiance ranged from 0.31 to 0.68 and in the subscale of interest-participation vs. apathy-withdrawal ranged from 0.36 to 0.69.

## RESULTS

Descriptive statistics for research variables are presented in this part. Table 1 shows such statistical indicators as mean and standard deviation of participants in the studied variables. The research hypotheses were also analyzed using MANOVA and the data were analyzed using SPSS 16. Table 2 provides a summary of the results of MANOVA to compare the mean scores of emotional intelligence and social competence of students with and without learning disabilities.

**Table 1.** Mean and standard deviation of emotional intelligence and social competence scores and their subscales in students with and without learning disabilities

| Variables                                   | Statistical Indicators                       |       |                         |       |        |
|---|--|-------|-------------------------|-------|--------|
|   | Normal Group                                 |       | Learning Disabled Group |       |        |
|   | Mean   | SD    | Mean                    | SD    |        |
| <b>Emotional Intelligence</b>               | 131.43                                       | 1.19  | 114.80                  | 9.01  |        |
| <b>Social Competence</b>                    | 12.07  | 1.65  | -8.23                   | 1.51  |        |
| <b>Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence</b> | Intrapersonal                                | 12.04 | 2.96                    | 10.36 | 2.50   |
|   | Interpersonal                                | 25.82 | 4.10                    | 22.54 | 4.28   |
|   | Stress Management                            | 25.18 | 4.09                    | 22.44 | 3.20   |
|   | Adaptability                                 | 26.20 | 3.96                    | 23.17 | 3.41   |
|   | General Mood                                 | 42.17 | 5.01                    | 36.43 | 4.35   |
| <b>Dimensions of Social Competence</b>      | Cooperation-Compliance vs. Anger-Defiance    | 23.38 | -10.72                  | 16.88 | 6.45   |
|   | Interest-Participation vs. Apathy-Withdrawal | 7.87  | 1.09                    | 1.57  | -22.85 |

**Table 2.** Summary of the results of MANOVA to compare the mean scores of emotional intelligence and social competence in students with and without learning disabilities

| Statistical Indicators Test Name | Value | Ratio (F) | Hypothesis Degree of Freedom (df) | Degree of Freedom for Error (df) | Level of Significance (p) |
|----------------------------------|-------|-----------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Pillai’s Trace</b>            | 0.50  | 66.06     | 2                                 | 131                              | 0.001                     |
| <b>Wilks’ Lambda</b>             | 0.49  | 66.06     | 2                                 | 131                              | 0.001                     |
| <b>Hotelling’s Trace</b>         | 1.01  | 66.06     | 2                                 | 131                              | 0.001                     |
| <b>Roy’s Largest Root</b>        | 1.01  | 66.06     | 2                                 | 131                              | 0.001                     |

Based on what was seen in table 2, it can be inferred that there is a significant difference between students with and without learning disabilities at least in terms of one of the two variables of emotional intelligence and social competence. One-way MANOVA was conducted to determine the point of difference. Table 3 shows the results of a one-way MANOVA to compare the mean scores of emotional intelligence and social competence variables in students with and without learning disabilities.

**Table 3.** Results of a one-way MANOVA to compare the mean scores of emotional intelligence and social competence variables in students with and without learning disabilities

| Dependent Variable            | Sum of Squares (SS) | Degree of Freedom (df) | Mean of Squares (MS) | Ratio (F) | Level of Significance (p) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| <b>Emotional Intelligence</b> | 9267.04             | 1                      | 9267.04              | 82.90     | 0.001                     |
| <b>Social Competence</b>      | 12793.48            | 1                      | 12793.48             | 49.84     | 0.001                     |

Based on the above table, the observed intergroup F is significant for both variables of emotional intelligence and social competence in the students with and without learning disabilities at the level of  $p \leq 0.001$ . Table 4 provides a summary of a MANOVA conducted to compare the mean scores of emotional intelligence and its components in students with and without learning disabilities.

**Table 4.** Summary of a MANOVA conducted to compare the mean scores of emotional intelligence and its components in students with and without learning disabilities

| Statistical Indicators<br>Test Name | Value | Ratio<br>(F) | Hypothesis<br>Degree of<br>Freedom (df) | Degree of<br>Freedom for<br>Error (df) | Level of<br>Significance (p) |
|-------------------------------------|-------|--------------|---|--|------------------------------|
| <b>Pillai's Trace</b>               | 0.42  | 17.84        | 5                                       | 128                                    | 0.001                        |
| <b>Wilks' Lambda</b>                | 0.59  | 17.84        | 5                                       | 128                                    | 0.001                        |
| <b>Hotelling's Trace</b>            | 0.70  | 17.84        | 5                                       | 128                                    | 0.001                        |
| <b>Roy's Largest Root</b>           | 0.70  | 17.84        | 5                                       | 128                                    | 0.001                        |

Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of groups at least in one subscale of emotional intelligence. One-way MANOVA was conducted on each of the subscales of emotional intelligence to determine the point of difference. Table 5 shows the results of a one-way MANOVA conducted to compare the subscales of emotional intelligence in students with and without learning disabilities.

**Table 5.** Results of a one-way MANOVA

| Variable  | Subscales            | Sum of<br>Squares (SS) | Degree of<br>Freedom (df) | Mean of<br>Squares (MS) | Ratio<br>(F) | Level of<br>Significance (p) |
|---|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Dimensions of<br/>Emotional<br/>Intelligence</b> | Intrapersonal        | 94.36                  | 1                         | 94.36                   | 12.50        | 0.001                        |
|   | Interpersonal        | 363.12                 | 1                         | 363.12                  | 20.58        | 0.001                        |
|   | Stress<br>Management | 294.92                 | 1                         | 294.92                  | 18.46        | 0.001                        |
|   | Adaptability         | 339.68                 | 1                         | 339.68                  | 24.79        | 0.001                        |
|   | General Mood         | 1016.2                 | 1                         | 1016.2                  | 50.17        | 0.001                        |

Considering the above table, the observed intergroup F for different components of emotional intelligence (intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, adaptability, and general mood) is significant at the level of  $p \leq 0.001$ . Thus, the first hypothesis that there is a significant difference between elementary students with and without learning disabilities in terms of emotional intelligence and its components is confirmed. Table 6 provides a summary of the results of a MANOVA conducted to compare the mean of subscales of social competence in students with and without learning disabilities.

**Table 6.** Summary of the results of a MANOVA conducted to compare the mean of subscales of social competence in students with and without learning disabilities

| Statistical Indicators<br>Test Name | Value | Ratio<br>(F) | Hypothesis<br>Degree of<br>Freedom (df) | Degree of<br>Freedom for<br>Error (df) | Level of<br>Significance (p) |
|-------------------------------------|-------|--------------|---|--|------------------------------|
| <b>Pillai's Trace</b>               | 0.27  | 16.37        | 3                                       | 130                                    | 0.001                        |
| <b>Wilks' Lambda</b>                | 0.72  | 16.37        | 3                                       | 130                                    | 0.001                        |
| <b>Hotelling's Trace</b>            | 0.38  | 16.37        | 3                                       | 130                                    | 0.001                        |
| <b>Roy's Largest Root</b>           | 0.38  | 16.37        | 3                                       | 130                                    | 0.001                        |

Table 6 shows that there is a significant difference between the means of groups at least in one of the subscales of social competence (Interest-Participation vs. Apathy-Withdrawal, and Cooperation-Compliance vs. Anger-Defiance). A one-way MANOVA was conducted on each of the subscales of social competence to determine the point of difference. Table 7 shows the results of a one-way MANOVA conducted to compare the means of subscales of social competence in students with and without learning disabilities.

**Table 7.** Results of a one-way MANOVA conducted to compare the means of subscales of social competence in students with and without learning disabilities

| Variable                                       | Subscales   | Sum of<br>Squares (SS) | Degree of<br>Freedom (df) | Mean of<br>Squares (MS) | Ratio<br>(F) | Level of<br>Significance (p) |
|--|---|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Dimensions of<br/>Social<br/>Competence</b> | Interest-<br>Participation vs.<br>Apathy-<br>Withdrawal | 1274.06                | 1                         | 1274.06                 | 23.95        | 0.001                        |
|  | Cooperation-<br>Compliance vs.<br>Anger-Defiance        | 4649.84                | 1                         | 1274.06                 | 39.77        | 0.001                        |

The above table indicates that the observed intergroup F for both components of social competence is significant at the level of  $p \leq 0.001$ . Thus, the second hypothesis that there is a significant difference between elementary students with and without learning disability in terms of social competence and its components (Interest-Participation vs. Apathy-Withdrawal, and Cooperation-Compliance vs. Anger-Defiance) is confirmed.

## DISCUSSION

The results of one-way and multivariate variance analyses show that there is a significant difference between students with and without learning disabilities in terms of emotional intelligence and its components. This hypothesis is significant at the level of  $p \leq 0.001$  and is confirmed. The results obtained from this research are in line with the findings of Baird, Scott, Dearing and Hamill [19], Hen and Goroshit [20] and Peterson [21].

To explain this finding, it can be said that the emotional development of students with learning disabilities follows a different pattern compared with normal students. Normal students enjoy very encouraging experiences which lead to the development of their self-esteem. Moreover, they have more opportunities to be self-content and enjoy others' favors. The self-esteem resulted from their success in doing different things and being supported and approved by others causes one to establish a healthy identity and leads to the institutionalization of frustration tolerance and tolerance of others in them. However, this is different in students with learning disabilities. Ineffective efforts to skillfully do the tasks lead to the feelings of failure and inefficacy rather than success. Neutralized efforts of students with learning disabilities lead to mocking feedbacks rather than reinforcement of self-confidence. These failures, however, cause parents not to give any encouraging feedbacks to their disabled children. Therefore, there is no doubt that many of the students with learning disabilities do not have an adequate emotional development.

Also students with learning disabilities are not able to process emotional information. Often, students with learning disabilities misconstrue what is said verbally or in the form of nonverbal social cues [7]. On the other hand, students with learning disabilities have little ability to manage their emotions and understand other people's emotions and receive less social support [20]. These students, compared with normal students, often have trouble in recognition of facial expressions, emotions, and body language and when exposed to academic challenges, they show maladaptive behaviors and negative affect [19].

The results of MANOVA and ANOVA show that there is a difference between students with and without learning disabilities in terms of social competence and its components. This hypothesis is significant at the level of  $p \leq 0.001$  and is confirmed. The findings of this research are in line with those of Vaughn et al. [22], Kochmanski [11] and Abolghasemi et al. [4]. To explain this finding, it can be mentioned that there are two possible reasons for the lack of social competence in students with learning disabilities. The first reason is that lack of social competence is a result of the same nervous disorders that lead to academic failure. The second hypothesis is that lack of social competence in these students is due to continued academic failures; however, it is yet to be discovered whether lack of social competence in students with learning disabilities is due to their history of academic failures or nervous disorders.

In addition, social skills form the basis for social competence [1]. Lack of social skills in students with learning disabilities leads to interpersonal problems in finding friends, working in groups, and self-control. Moreover, students with learning disabilities need more time to process information and decode different educational and social situations and in most educational environment, this socially-perceived delay time is unacceptable; finally, processing problems lead to lack of social competence and social skills in this group of students. Regardless of the main reason, education professionals, educators, and parents should lay the ground for these students to establish appropriate social interactions and successful communication with their peers. Otherwise, academic and social problems of students with learning disabilities would exacerbate. Among the limitations of the present study was the utilized tool, which was limited to questionnaire. Also this study was conducted on the students of Ahvaz and the studied sample includes students of 2nd and 3rd grade of elementary school. Thus, the generalizability of its results is limited. It is suggested that research be conducted to compare these variables in students with learning disabilities in different academic levels. It is also suggested that the results of this research be applied in combination with the findings of similar studies in Iran to prepare a diagnostic and remedial program in order to improve the studied variables.

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