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A study on how gender and stream of studies impact social intelligence of undergraduates in Sri Lanka

Vajra Muthukumar^{1*}, Pretheeba Pratheesh² and Tharmika Ilyathambi²

¹Faculty of Management Studies, Open University Sri Lanka

²Faculty of Commerce and Management, Eastern University, Sri Lanka

Abstract

Humans are masters at social interaction. The ability to make sense of other people's behavior is essential in people's daily functioning. As a result, they want to know that people's activities are motivated by aims and driven by motives. At present, it has been observed that undergraduates face many issues such as a lack of empathy, suicidal thoughts, and causing disturbances to the peace of the society. This dilemma highlights the need to study social intelligence, especially among undergraduates in Sri Lanka. The present study attempted to determine whether students from different genders and streams of studies show differences, in terms of social intelligence and its related components. The questionnaire survey method was employed to collect data from 200 undergraduates from a selected university, in Sri Lanka which includes students from nine faculties. The research gathered responses from 182 students, which is 91%. Descriptive analysis was performed to identify the social intelligence among undergraduates regarding their gender and the subject stream. Inferential analysis was performed to identify the differences in social intelligence among undergraduates concerning their gender and subject stream. Results showed that there was no significant difference between the genders on their total score measuring spiritual intelligence dimensions of cooperativeness, confidence, patience, social environment recognition, tactfulness, memory, and sense of humor, but the genders did tend to differ in sensitivity dimension. It may be observed from the data that undergraduates in the Technology stream are more cooperative than students in other streams. Agriculture faculty undergraduates showed a higher level of confidence in contrast to other students. Commerce students showed more patient than students from other faculties. Nursing students are better than other faculty students at recognizing the social context. Undergraduates in Physical Science appeared to be more tactful than other students. Undergraduates in the Medical faculty displayed a strong sense of humor, while students in the Arts and Culture faculty were found to have a higher memory power than undergraduate students in other faculties.

Keywords: Gender, Social intelligence, Subject streams, Undergraduates

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ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1035-4040>

*Corresponding author:

E-mail address: vajramuthukumar@gmail.com (V. Muthukumar)

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Introduction

Globalization has undoubtedly transformed the world, forging stronger connections between countries and cultures. However, this phenomenon has also ushered in a complex landscape characterized by escalating tensions and intricacies in societal interactions (Held & McGrew, 2020). As a response to this evolving environment, the concept of social intelligence has emerged as a vital and pressing concern in contemporary society.

The significance of social intelligence cannot be overstated, given its role in enabling individuals to navigate this intricate globalized world effectively. In the face of mounting complexities, acquiring and developing social intelligence has become indispensable for individuals, allowing them not only to participate fully in their daily lives but also to attain a life characterized by prosperity and tranquility within society (Goleman, 2006).

Recent studies highlight the inextricable link between social intelligence and psychological well-being. Peace of mind and the ability to lead a harmonious life are closely intertwined with one's level of social intelligence. Individuals with higher social intelligence tend to foster healthy interpersonal relationships and are better equipped to achieve success in various aspects of life (Brackett & Salovey, 2006). Furthermore, social intelligence plays a pivotal role in addressing the myriad of social challenges that arise in today's interconnected world. It enables individuals to navigate diverse social contexts, resolve conflicts amicably, and actively participate in various social activities. This multifaceted aspect of social intelligence makes it an integral component of educational growth and personal development (Matthews et al., 2002). A study by Smith and Jones (2019) found that individuals with strong social intelligence are more successful in cross-cultural business negotiations, emphasizing its relevance in achieving prosperity in a globalized society.

As early as 1920, Edward Thorndike recognized the significance of social intelligence when he described it as "the capacity to comprehend and control men and women, boys and girls, to behave sensibly in human connections." His insight remains relevant today, as social intelligence continues to be a critical factor in individuals' ability to thrive in an ever-evolving globalized society.

Despite the significance of social intelligence, there is an escalating concern regarding its insufficiency among undergraduate students, a demographic traditionally viewed as highly productive contributors to society. A substantial number of undergraduates, regrettably, fail to realize their complete potential, primarily due to a deficiency in guidance, motivation, and social intelligence. This deficiency has manifested itself in various concerning ways, encompassing non-conformist behavior, a conspicuous absence of empathy, disruptions within societal dynamics, and even the emergence of suicidal ideation (Joseph & Lakshmi, 2010).

Recent literature reviews bring to light the pivotal role of social connectedness as a protective factor against high-risk behaviors, including suicidal thoughts (Bernat & Resnick, 2006; McLean et al., 2008). Alarming within the context of Sri Lanka, instances of extreme measures being taken by undergraduates, such as self-immolation, along with their engagement in antisocial activities like substance abuse, sexual misconduct, and smoking, have been reported (Senanayake et al., 2018; Chandrasekara, 2014; Perera and Mohamed, 2004).

This study emphasizes the urgency of addressing the dearth of social intelligence among undergraduates, particularly in Sri Lanka, and emphasizes the critical need for interventions that can enhance their social aptitude, thereby mitigating the associated risks and fostering their constructive contribution to society. The primary objective of this study was to assess the level of social intelligence among undergraduate students in a selected university in Sri Lanka. Further, the study investigated whether there is a difference in social intelligence based on gender and the subject stream of undergraduates.

To the general level of social intelligence, difference in social intelligence between male and female undergraduates and the impact of the subject stream (e.g., Science, Arts, Commerce) on the level of social intelligence of undergraduates in the university were assessed.?

Methodology

A quantitative approach was used for data collection and analysis. Cross-sectional data were collected and analyzed. A survey method was adopted to acquire the required information from respondents. The reliability and validity tests were performed in the questionnaire's validation and assurance were adequately assessed.

Social Intelligence Scale (SIS) developed by Chada & Ganeshan (2009) was adopted to conduct this survey. The scale consists of 66 items related to 8 components, such of confidence, sensitivity, recognition of social environment, tactfulness, sense of humor, memory, patient, and cooperativeness. The subjects were given a choice of three alternatives for each item and were requested to select one. In the pilot survey, it was identified that one question from the sense of humor dimension was not understood by the respondents. Therefore, that particular question was eliminated and the questionnaire used in the study contains 65 items.

The respondents answered the questions through selecting offered answers which is suitable for them based on their gender and stream. The individuals were provided with three options for each item in the dimensions of patience, confidence, cooperativeness, sensitivity, sense of humor, and recognition of social environment and asked to choose one. However, when it came to the tactfulness component, the responses were either "Yes" or "No." The correct response was given a score of one. The last component, memory, a score of 1 was given for correct responses and a score of 0 for incorrect responses. A high score on each dimension and the total scale indicated greater social intelligence, whereas a low score indicated lower social intelligence.

The questionnaires were distributed among 200 undergraduates who were selected out of 1232 using a disproportionate sampling technique, studying in different streams of study in a selected university in Sri Lanka. This specific sample was selected to participate in the survey, since it is not practical to obtain information from the entire population. The questionnaires were used by researchers in a direct "face to face" survey. Accordingly, 182 valid, completed questionnaires were obtained. A high response rate of 91% was achieved owing to persistence. The researcher considers moral values as an important aspect of the study. Each respondent is informed of the purpose of the study and is assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Respondents were not under any obligation to complete the questionnaire. Participant's name was not included in the

questionnaire. An ethical relationship was established between the researcher and respondents when collecting data.

In order to achieve the objective of the study, univariate analysis was performed. As a result, descriptive statistics such as mean score and standard deviation were used to assess each variable in the study model. However, inferential analysis two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to evaluate variations in social intelligence among undergraduate students in relation to their gender and subject streams for another objective of this study.

Results and Discussion

Gender, subject stream, respondents' parents' occupation, and respondents' parents' educational level were used to create a profile of the respondents.

Gender: In Table-1 the distribution of the undergraduates in terms of gender can be seen. It shows an overview of the gender group demographic information of the collected samples. The majority of respondents were female undergraduates. They consist of 53.3%. Among 182 respondents only 85 respondents were male undergraduates. Male undergraduates consist of 46.7%. The gender of the undergraduate is a vital factor in social intelligence.

Table 1: Demographic distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	85	46.7%
Female	97	53.3%
Total	182	100%

Subject Stream: Table 2 illustrates the subject stream that these undergraduates pursue based on the data obtained. Arts and Culture, Agriculture, Technology, Medicine, Nursing, Physical Science, Bioscience, Commerce, and Management are among the nine programs offered at the selected university. Students in the Arts and Culture stream account for the majority of those who responded. Half of the responders were members of this group. Management and Physical Science undergraduates account for 9% of those who responded. Commerce students account for 8% of those who responded. Biological Science students account for 7% of those who responded. Students studying Medicine make up 4% of those who responded. Only 2% of the responders are undergraduates in Nursing.

Table 2: Subject stream pursued by the undergraduate students who participated in the study

Subject Stream	Frequency	Percentage
Arts & Culture	93	51%
Agriculture	8	4%
Technology	10	6%
Medicine	8	4%
Nursing	4	2%
Physical Science	17	9%
Bio Science	12	7%
Commerce	14	8%
Management	16	9%
Total	182	100%

Education level of the respondent's father: Table 3 displays the educational achievement of the respondents' fathers based on the data obtained. The fathers of 71 of hundred and 182 respondents have an educational qualification above the Ordinary Level. The fathers of 27% of respondents have an educational qualification ranging from grade five to Ordinary Level. Only 16% of respondents' fathers have completed up to grade five and others 18% do not have an education qualification.

Table 3: Education level of the fathers of the study participants

Father's educational level	Frequency	Percentage
Up to Grade Five	30	16%
Between Grade five and Ordinary Level	49	27%
Above Ordinary Level	71	39%
Others (no education qualification)	32	18%
Total	182	100%

Education level of respondent's mother: Based on the data collected, Table 4 shows the education qualifications of the respondents' mothers. The education qualifications of 52 respondents' mothers ranged from grade five to Ordinary Level. The mothers of 26% of respondents have completed education up to grade five. Mothers of 23% of respondents have an education level above the Ordinary Level. The mothers of 22% of respondents do not possess education qualifications.

Table 4: Education level of the mothers of the study participants

Mother's educational level	Frequency	Percentage
Up to grade five	47	26%
Between grade five and Ordinary level	52	29%
Above Ordinary Level	42	23%
Others (no education qualification)	41	22%
Total	182	100%

Occupation of respondent's father

Table 5 displays the occupations of the respondent's fathers based on the information obtained. The fathers of 39% of the respondents work in the government sector and 31% of them work in the non-government sector.

Table 5: Occupation of the fathers of the respondents

Occupations of fathers	Frequency	Percentage
Government	70	39%
Non- Government	57	31%
Others	55	30%
Total	182	100%

Occupation of respondent's mother

Table 6 displays the occupations of the respondent's mothers based on the information obtained. 62% of the respondent's mother work in the government sector and 25% among them work in non-government sectors.

Table 6: Occupation of the mothers of the participants respondents

Occupations of mothers	Frequency	Percentage
Government	112	62%
Non- Government	46	25%
Others	24	13%
Total	182	100%

Influence of gender differences in social intelligence among undergraduates

The data was assessed using univariate analysis and two-way ANOVA testing. The mean values and standard deviation of the variable were utilized in this study to evaluate the degree of social intelligence among undergraduates in relation to their gender. ANOVA testing was performed to see if there were variations in the social intelligence aspects across undergraduates based on their gender. Table 7 shows the sum of square, mean square, significance and mean of each dimension of social intellectual capacity based on gender.

Table 7: Influence of gender on social intellectual capacity

Dimension			Sum of Square	Df	Mean square	Sig.	Mean
Cooperativeness	Gender	Male	0.063	1	0.063	0.937	20.316
		Female					20.343
	Stream of Study		717.361	8	89.670	0.000	-
Sensitivity	Gender	Male	3.843	1	3.843	0.439	2.827
		Female					2.349
	Stream of Study		116.503	8	14.563	0.024	-
Confidence	Gender	Male	18.389	1	18.389	0.017	2.045
		Female					1.946
	Stream of Study		201.325	8	25.166	0.000	-
Patience	Gender	Male	0.147	1	0.147	0.848	2.068
		Female					2.070
	Stream of Study		122.151	8	15.269	0.000	-
Recognition of social environment	Gender	Male	7.334	1	7.334	0.054	1.432
		Female					1.386
	Stream of Study		12.568	8	1.571	0.598	-
Tactfulness	Gender	Male	21.858	1	21.858	0.038	2.376
		Female					2.051
	Stream of Study		16.171	8	2.021	0.917	-
Memory	Gender	Male	14.412	1	14.412	0.188	3.192
		Female					2.850
	Stream of Study		57.859	8	7.232	0.536	-
Sense of Humour	Gender	Male	0.026	1	0.026	0.953	2.930
		Female					2.798
	Stream of Study		421.067	8	52.633	0.000	-

There is no statistically significant difference between gender and cooperativeness. It is larger than 0.05 since the significant value is 0.937. However, there are statistically significant differences when it comes to the stream of study. Because 0.000 is the significant value. While the mean score for cooperativeness is the same for both male and female undergraduates. It is around

20.3. As a result, it is evident that there is no substantial difference in cooperativeness between male and female undergraduates. There is no statistically significant difference between gender and sensitivity. It is larger than 0.05 since the significant value is 0.439. However, there are statistically significant differences when it comes to the stream of study. Because 0.024 is the significant value. The mean score for sensitivity is larger for males than females. As a result, it is evident that there is substantial difference in sensitivity between male and female undergraduates.

When we look at confidence by gender, we can see that there is a statistically significant difference between the two. Because the significant value is 0.017, it is less than 0.05. When it comes to the field of study, however, there are statistically significant differences. Because the significant value is 0.000. Both male and female undergraduates have the same mean confidence score. It's around 2.0. As a result, it is evident that there is no substantial difference in confidence between men and women. There is no statistically significant difference between gender and patience when we look at patience by gender. It is larger than 0.05 since the significant value is 0.848. However, there are statistically significant differences when it comes to the stream of study. Because 0.000 is the significant value. The mean score for patience is the same for both male and female undergraduates. It is around 2.07. As a result, it is evident that there is no substantial difference in patience between male and female undergraduates.

When we look at recognition of social environment by gender, there is no statistically significant difference between the two. Because the significant value is 0.054, it is larger than 0.05. However, when it comes to the field of study, there are no statistically significant differences. Because 0.598 is the significant value. The mean score for recognition of social environment is the same for both males and females. It is around 1.4. As a result, it is evident that there is no substantial difference in tactfulness between men and women. There is a statistically significant difference between gender and tactfulness when we look at tactfulness by gender. It is smaller than 0.05 since the significant value is 0.038. However, there are no statistically significant differences when it comes to the stream of study. Because 0.917 is the significant value. While the mean score for tactfulness is the same for both males and females. It is somewhere around 2. As a result, it is evident that there is no substantial difference in Tactfulness between male and female students.

There is no statistically significant difference between gender and memory when we look at memory by gender. It is larger than 0.05 since the significant value is 0.188. However, there are no statistically significant differences when it comes to the stream of study. Because 0.536 is the significant value. While the mean score for memory is the same for both males and females. It is around 3. As a result, it is evident that there is no substantial difference in memory between men and women. There is no statistically significant difference between gender and sense of humor when we look at sense of humor by gender. It is larger than 0.05 since the significant value is 0.953. However, there are statistically significant differences when it comes to the stream of study. Because 0.000 is the significant value. While the mean score for sense of humor is the same for both males and females. It is somewhere around 3. As a result, it is evident that there is no substantial difference in sense of humor between male and female undergraduates in the University.

According to the previous two-way ANOVA testing statements, cooperativeness, sensitivity, patience, social environment recognition, tactfulness, memory, and sense of humor are not

statistically different between gender. However, only confidence differs statistically between men and women. Cooperativeness, confidence, patience, social environment recognition, tactfulness, memory, and sense of humor dimensions have no differences between males and females, according to univariate analysis. However, the sensitivity dimension only differs between male and female undergraduates in the University.

Subject stream differences in social intelligence among undergraduates

Univariate analysis was used to evaluate the effect of the subject stream on the social intelligence among the undergraduates. The mean values and standard deviation of the variable were utilized in this study to estimate the degree of social intelligence among undergraduates in relation to their stream of study. The mean and standard deviation of total social intellectual capacity by stream are shown in Table 8.

According to the subject streams, the below table shows the mean scores and the standard deviation of aspects of social intelligence. It reveals that the mean score of cooperativeness for the Technology subject stream is 23.25, which is high, while the mean score of cooperativeness for the Agriculture subject stream is 13.37, which is low. In terms of cooperativeness, the mean scores of different subject streams fall in the middle. The mean score of sensitivity for the Biological Science stream is 19.75, which is high, while the mean score for agriculture is 16.12, which is low. The mean scores of other streams are in the middle.

The mean score of confidence for the Agriculture stream is 16.87, which is high, and the mean score for the Nursing stream is 12.25, which is low. The mean scores for confidence of other streams are in the middle. The mean score of patience for the Commerce stream is 18.85 which is high and the mean of score of Agriculture stream is 15.12 which is low. Mean scores of other streams fall in between them. The mean score of recognition of the social environment of the Nursing stream is 6.25 which is high and the mean score for the Commerce stream is 16.12 which is low. Mean scores of other streams fall in between them. The mean score of tactfulness for the Physical Science stream is 5.16, which is high, while the mean score of tactfulness for the Technology stream is 4.08, which is low. Mean scores of other streams are in the middle. The Medicine stream has a mean score of 13.64 for sense of humor, which is high, while the Agriculture stream has a mean score of 7.50 for sense of humor which is low. The mean scores of other streams are in the middle. The mean score of memory for the Arts & Culture stream is 8.57 which is high and the mean score of Medicine is 7.14 which is low. Mean scores of other streams fall in between them.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that undergraduates in the Technology stream are more cooperative than students in other streams. In comparison to other undergraduates, Agriculture faculty undergraduates have a high level of confidence. When it comes to patience, Commerce stream students are more patient than other faculty students. The Nursing undergraduates are able to recognize the social environment better than other faculty students. Physical Science students are more tactful than other students. Medical faculty undergraduates have a high sense of humor while Arts and Culture students have a high memory power than undergraduates in other faculties.

Table 8: Total social intellectual capacity by the study stream

Dimensions	Faculty									
		Arts	Agri	Tec	Med	Nurse	Phy.S	Bio	Com	Mgt
Cooperativeness	Mean	20.47	13.37	23.25	18.00	20.25	21.27	19.16	23.21	20.06
	Sd	(3.27)	(1.40)	(4.07)	(2.80)	(1.70)	(2.69)	(2.32)	(2.93)	(3.73)
Sensitivity	Mean	17.65	16.12	17.66	17.85	15.75	17.72	19.75	17.21	16.31
	Sd	(2.83)	(2.41)	(1.82)	(0.66)	(1.25)	(2.02)	(2.13)	(2.69)	(2.70)
Confidence	Mean	14.71	16.87	13.16	12.85	12.25	13.88	14.25	13.92	16.43
	Sd	(1.88)	(1.24)	(2.12)	(1.61)	(1.25)	(1.07)	(2.00)	(1.81)	(1.86)
Patience	Mean	16.97	15.12	17.00	16.21	17.00	15.55	16.91	18.85	17.37
	Sd	(1.89)	(2.03)	(1.90)	(2.08)	(1.41)	(2.09)	(1.78)	(2.17)	(2.24)
Recognition of social environment	Mean	5.66	6.00	5.41	5.57	6.25	6.05	6.08	5.64	5.12
	Sd	(1.23)	(0.00)	(1.72)	(1.34)	(1.89)	(1.83)	(1.50)	(1.27)	(1.78)
Tactfulness	Mean	4.87	5.12	4.08	5.14	4.75	5.16	5.00	4.50	4.37
	Sd	(2.17)	(2.94)	(1.67)	(1.95)	(2.06)	(3.11)	(2.41)	(2.06)	(1.74)
Sense of humour	Mean	10.63	7.5	13.16	13.64	7.75	11.72	8.25	11.28	9.75
	Sd	(3.08)	(0.75)	(1.11)	(1.21)	(0.95)	(2.73)	(0.96)	3.42	(2.64)
Memory	Mean	8.57	7.8	7.5	7.14	7.50	7.27	8.08	7.64	7.93
	Sd	(3.36)	(1.72)	(1.93)	(2.07)	(1.91)	(1.90)	(2.08)	(3.34)	(1.84)

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