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Soft Skills of Prospective Teachers: An Empirical Study among B.Ed. Students

[*1]Dr. K Saileela and [2]Selvendiran S

[*1]Assistant Professor, Govt. College of Education, Komarapalayam, Tamil Nadu, India.

[2]Ph.D. Research Scholar, Annamalai University, Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract

The present study investigates the soft skills of B.Ed. students with reference to selected demographic variables. A descriptive survey method was adopted for the study. The sample comprised 300 B.Ed. students selected using a random sampling technique. Data were collected using a Soft Skills Scale developed by the investigator. The variables considered for the study included gender, age group, type of institution, location of institution, stream of study, and medium of instruction. The data were analyzed using *t*-test and ANOVA.

The results of the study revealed a significant difference in the soft skills of B.Ed. students with respect to gender, age group, location of institution, stream of study, and medium of instruction. Female students, students in the 26–30 years age group, students studying in urban institutions, science stream students, and English medium students exhibited higher levels of soft skills. However, no significant difference was found in the soft skills of B.Ed. students with respect to the type of institution. The findings highlight the need to integrate soft skills training into teacher education programmes to enhance professional competence and employability of prospective teachers.

Keywords: Soft Skills, Prospective Teachers, Teacher Education, Demographic Factors.

1. Introduction

Soft skills are essential competencies for prospective teachers, enabling effective communication, classroom management, and professional interaction. In teacher education programmes, particularly the B.Ed. programme, the development of soft skills is crucial for preparing future teachers to meet the evolving demands of the education system. Beyond academic knowledge, B.Ed. students are expected to demonstrate interpersonal and professional abilities that support meaningful teaching–learning processes. However, the level of soft skills may vary across demographic and institutional factors. Therefore, the present study examines the soft skills of B.Ed. students with reference to selected variables.

2. Method of Study

The present study adopted a descriptive survey method to examine the Soft Skills of B.Ed. students. The population of the study comprised B.Ed. students studying in colleges of education in Cuddalore District. From this population, a sample of 300 B.Ed. students was selected using the random sampling technique.

To collect the required data, the investigators used the following tools:

i). Personal Data Form

A Personal Data Form was used to collect demographic information of the respondents such as gender, location of institution, type of institution, age group, stream of subject specialization, and medium of instruction. Based on these variables, the respondents were classified as follows:

- Gender: Male and Female
- Location of Institution: Rural, Semi-Urban, and Urban
- Type of Institution: Government, Government Aided, and Private
- Age Group: Below 20 years, 20–25 years, 26–30 years, and Above 30 years
- Stream/Subject Specialization: Arts, Science, Commerce, Language, and Others
- Medium of Instruction: Tamil and English

ii). Soft Skills Scale

The Soft Skills Scale was used to assess the level of Soft Skills among B.Ed. students. The scale consisted of statements measuring Soft Skills such as rehearsal, elaboration, organization, and comprehension, used by students during learning. The scale was administered in a four-point Likert-type format with response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The scoring pattern adopted was 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively.

***Corresponding Author:** Dr. K Saileela

The total score obtained by the respondents indicated their level of Soft Skills, with higher scores reflecting a higher level of Soft Skills strategy usage. The reliability of the Soft Skills Scale was established using Cronbach's alpha, which confirmed the internal consistency and suitability of the tool for the present study.

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, and one-way ANOVA to determine the significance of differences in Soft Skills with respect to the selected demographic variables.

3. Need for the Study

In the contemporary educational environment, soft skills such as communication, collaboration, adaptability, and interpersonal competence are essential qualities for effective teaching and professional growth. For B.Ed. students who are prospective teachers, the development of strong soft skills is vital for classroom management, student engagement, and professional interaction. However, the acquisition of soft skills may vary based on personal, institutional, and academic factors. Understanding these variations is necessary to strengthen teacher education programmes and to design appropriate training strategies. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the soft skills of B.Ed. students with respect to selected demographic variables.

4. Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Difference in the Soft Skills of B.Ed. Students in Terms of Gender

Gender	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value	Remarks
Male	128	101.68	12.76	2.62	0.009	Significant
Female	172	106.94	11.83			

It is inferred from the table-1 that the mean score of male and female B.Ed. students on Soft Skills was found to be 101.68 and 106.94 respectively, and the corresponding standard deviation values were 12.76 and 11.83. It is further inferred from the table that the obtained *p*-value (0.009) is less than the 5% level of significance. Hence, the respective null hypothesis is rejected ($p < 0.05$). Thus, the result reveals that there is a significant difference in the Soft Skills of B.Ed. students with respect to gender, and female students exhibit higher Soft Skills than their male counterparts.

Table 2: Difference in the Soft Skills of B.Ed. Students in Terms of Age Group

Age Group	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-value	p-value	Remarks
Below 20 years	64	100.92	13.14	4.58	0.004	Significant
20–25 years	146	104.87	12.01			
26–30 years	58	108.36	11.27			
Above 30 years	32	103.41	12.59			

It is inferred from the table-2 that the mean scores of B.Ed. students belonging to different age groups on Soft Skills were found to be 100.92 for below 20 years, 104.87 for 20–25 years, 108.36 for 26–30 years, and 103.41 for above 30 years, with corresponding standard deviation values of 13.14, 12.01, 11.27, and 12.59 respectively. It is further inferred from the table that the obtained *p*-value (0.004) is less than the 5% level of significance. Hence, the respective null hypothesis is rejected ($p < 0.05$). Thus, the result reveals that there is a significant difference in the Soft Skills of B.Ed. students with respect to age group, and students belonging to the 26–30 years age group exhibit higher Soft Skills than those in other age groups.

Table 3: Difference in the Soft Skills of B.Ed. Students in Terms of Type of Institution

Type of Institution	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-value	p-value	Remarks
Government	92	104.78	12.08	1.21	0.299	Not Significant
Government Aided	88	106.12	11.74			
Private	120	103.89	12.42			

It is inferred from the table-3 that the mean scores of B.Ed. students studying in different types of institutions on Soft Skills were found to be 104.78 for Government institutions, 106.12 for Government Aided institutions, and 103.89 for Private/Self-Financing institutions, with corresponding standard deviation values of 12.08, 11.74, and 12.42, respectively. It is further inferred from the table that the obtained *p*-value (0.299) is greater than the 5% level of significance. Hence, the respective null hypothesis is accepted ($p > 0.05$). Thus, the result reveals that there is no significant difference in the Soft Skills of B.Ed. students with respect to the type of institution.

Table 4: Difference in the Soft Skills of B.Ed. Students in Terms of Location of Institution

Location of Institution	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-value	p-value	Remarks
Rural	104	101.34	12.88	5.36	0.005	Significant
Semi-Urban	96	105.76	11.96			
Urban	100	109.12	11.21			

It is inferred from the table that the mean scores of B.Ed. students studying in rural, semi-urban, and urban institutions on Soft Skills were found to be 101.34, 105.76, and 109.12, respectively, with corresponding standard deviation values of 12.88, 11.96, and 11.21. It is further inferred from the table that the obtained *p*-value (0.005) is less than the 5% significance level. Hence, the respective null hypothesis is rejected ($p < 0.05$). Thus, the result reveals that there is a significant difference in the Soft Skills of B.Ed. students with respect to the location of the institution, and students studying in urban institutions exhibit higher Soft Skills than those studying in semi-urban and rural institutions.

Table 5: Difference in the Soft Skills of B.Ed. Students in Terms of Stream/Subject Specialization

Stream/Subject Specialization	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-value	p-value	Remarks
Arts	72	102.11	12.64	3.41	0.010	Significant
Science	94	109.28	10.93			
Commerce	48	105.67	11.89			
Language	56	106.45	11.58			
Others	30	103.02	12.31			

It is inferred from the table-5 that the mean scores of B.Ed.

Students belonging to different streams on Soft Skills were found to be 102.11 for Arts, 109.28 for Science, 105.67 for Commerce, 106.45 for Language, and 103.02 for Other streams, with corresponding standard deviation values of 12.64, 10.93, 11.89, 11.58, and 12.31, respectively. It is further inferred from the table that the obtained *p*-value (0.010) is less than the 5% significance level. Hence, the respective null hypothesis is rejected ($p < 0.05$). Thus, the result reveals that there is a significant difference in the Soft Skills of B.Ed. students with respect to their stream of study, and students from the Science stream exhibit higher Soft Skills than students from other streams.

Table 6: Difference in the Soft Skills of B.Ed. Students in Terms of Medium of Instruction

Medium of Instruction	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value	Remarks
Tamil	168	101.96	12.71	3.87	0.001	Significant
English	132	108.64	11.05			

It is inferred from the table-6 that the mean score of B.Ed. students studying through the Tamil medium on Soft Skills is 101.96 with a standard deviation of 12.71, while that of English medium students is 108.64 with a standard deviation of 11.05. It is further inferred that the obtained *p*-value (0.001) is less than the 5% level of significance. Hence, the respective null hypothesis is rejected ($p < 0.05$). Thus, the result reveals that there is a significant difference in the Soft Skills of B.Ed. students with respect to the medium of instruction, and English medium students exhibit higher Soft Skills than Tamil medium students.

5. Results and Discussion

The results of the study revealed a significant difference in the soft skills of B.Ed. students with respect to gender, with female students exhibiting higher soft skills than male students. This finding is consistent with earlier studies which reported that female students tend to demonstrate better communication, interpersonal sensitivity, and collaborative skills, all of which are core components of soft skills (Goleman, 1998; Deepa & Seth, 2013).

With regard to age group, the study found a significant difference in soft skills, with students in the 26–30 years age group showing higher levels of soft skills compared to other age groups. This may be attributed to greater maturity, exposure, and learning experiences. Similar findings were reported by Robles (2012), who emphasized that soft skills improve with age and professional exposure.

The analysis further indicated that there was no significant difference in soft skills based on the type of institution. This suggests that institutional management—government, aided, or private—does not significantly influence the development of soft skills among B.Ed. students. This finding aligns with the observations of Rao (2014), who noted that soft skill development depends more on individual engagement and training opportunities than institutional type.

A significant difference was observed with respect to the location of the institution, where students from urban institutions exhibited higher soft skills than their rural and semi-urban counterparts. This may be due to increased exposure to communication opportunities, technology, and diverse social interactions in urban settings. Similar conclusions were drawn by Mishra and Khurana (2017), who highlighted the role of environmental exposure in soft skill development.

The findings also revealed a significant difference in soft skills based on stream of specialization, with science students outperforming students from other streams. This could be attributed to greater emphasis on problem-solving, teamwork, and analytical communication in science-based learning environments. Previous studies have also indicated that discipline-specific academic demands influence soft skill acquisition (Andrews & Higson, 2008).

Finally, the study found a significant difference based on medium of instruction, with English-medium students exhibiting higher soft skills than Tamil-medium students. This finding supports earlier research suggesting that English-medium instruction enhances communication confidence and professional interaction skills (Rao, 2014; Robles, 2012).

Overall, the findings of the study are in agreement with earlier research and underscore the influence of demographic and academic variables on the soft skills of B.Ed. students.

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