



Enhancing Social Skills Among Secondary School Students: Evaluating The Impact Of The Autonomous Learner Model

Rajini Alex^{1*}, T.C. Thankachan²

^{1*}Research Scholar, School of Pedagogical Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala,

²Associate Professor, St. Thomas College of Teacher Education, Pala, & Research Guide, SPS, MG University, Kottayam, Kerala,

*Corresponding Author: Rajini Alex

*Research Scholar, School of Pedagogical Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala,

Article History	Abstract
Received: Revised: Accepted:	<p><i>Autonomous Learner Model developed by Betts and Kercher (Betts et al, 2021) is a framework developed to promote and support autonomous learning in students. The present investigation aimed to study the impact of the Autonomous Learner Model on Social skills among the Secondary school students. The design selected for the study was non-equivalent pre-test- post-test experimental group design. The study was conducted on a sample of secondary school students who were following the Kerala State syllabus. Specifically, the sample consisted of 74 students from Standard Nine of Holy Cross Higher Secondary School, Cherpunkal, Kottayam, Kerala. The instruments used for the study were Instructional materials based on Autonomous Learner Model and Existing Activity Oriented Method prepared by the investigators and Social Skill Rating Scale (Sood et al,2012). Treatment was given for two months in Social Science to the Experimental group using the Autonomous Learner Model, while the Control group received instruction using the current Activity Oriented Method. The study revealed that Autonomous Learner Model enhanced social skills among secondary school students when compared to the existing Activity Oriented Method of Instruction. The findings of the study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on learner autonomy while providing practical insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policy makers to design educational interventions that foster holistic development among students.</i></p>
CC License CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0	Keywords: <i>Autonomous learning, Autonomous Learner Model, Activity oriented method, Social Skill, Secondary School students etc.</i>

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is critical period of development characterised by numerous challenges and opportunities. During this stage, individuals experience significant changes in the cognitive, emotional and social domains. One essential aspect of adolescent development is the acquisition and cultivation of social skills. Social skills are very decisive in shaping the personal, educational, and professional success and well-being of

adolescents. Students with strong social skills are more likely to have positive relationships with peers and teachers, demonstrate effective communication and conflict resolution, and exhibit greater empathy and cooperation. Bala (2019) considered skills like self-awareness, communication, interpersonal relationships, and empathy to serve as the foundation for a dynamic citizen who successfully navigates obstacles in future. On the other hand, students who lack these skills may face challenges in forming meaningful connections, resolving conflicts, and experiencing overall well-being. Therefore, equipping adolescents with necessary social skills is imperative to ensure their successful transition into adulthood.

The topic of enhancing social skills in secondary school students is of great importance in today's educational context. The secondary school period is a critical period for the development of social skills as students navigate their way through adolescence and develop their identity.

The Autonomous Learner Model (ALM) is an instructional model that empowers students to take responsibility for their learning, develop critical thinking abilities, and foster self-regulation skills. This learner-centric approach encourages self-directed learning, problem-solving, and collaboration, all of which are vital for enhancing social skills. Furthermore, examining the impact of ALM on social skills can provide insights into the correlation between learner autonomy and social competence, shedding light on the potential benefits of fostering independent learning in educational settings. Kim (2023) analysed autonomous learning strategy-led behaviour changes in academic and social contexts.

The rationale for investigating the effectiveness of Autonomous Learner Model on social skills among secondary school students stems from the need to enhance educational interventions (Rani, 2015) that target these skills. Strong social skills not only contribute to the personal happiness but also foundation for future success in the professional world where collaboration and effective communication are highly valued. Possessing these skills is likely to result meaningful and supportive relationship, ability to handle interpersonal conflicts constructively and engaging in prosocial behaviours (Wentzel, 2015).

Several studies have evaluated the impact of educational programmes, methods and models on social skills development of secondary school students. Al Saud, (2017) proved educational video games helped underprivileged children in developing social skills. Rayanagoudar et al. (2019) revealed that life skill education programme helped to develop the students' self-awareness, interpersonal relationship, and communication. Palanisami (2019) proved social skill intervention programme had significant effect on the development of leadership, Communication, peer relation skills, and friendship making Skills. Subramonian, et al (2021) investigated the effectiveness of blended learning on different social skills and found that, compared with the constructivist method, blended learning method was more effective in developing social skills like communication, interpersonal skill and problem-solving skills among adolescents. Sariyatun, et al (2021) proved junior high school students' social skill development was influenced by social science digital learning materials. Punaji (2020) proved that learning styles and the community of Inquiry Learning Model had a significant impact on students' social skills.

The effectiveness of Autonomous Learner model of Betts and Kercher, (1999) is found to be useful in developing English language proficiency (Yarahmadzahi & Bazleh, 2012), Self-esteem and Achievement in Science (Pinto, 2018)

Aladwan (2020) examined the impact of training program based on Autonomous Learner Model on developing creative leadership skills among gifted students. The result of the study showed that Autonomous training program enhanced skills such as communication, decision making and problem solving of gifted students.

Kormos & Csizer (2014) conducted a study on autonomous learning behaviour, highlighting the influence of contextual variations on such behaviour, while also emphasizing the need for further research in different geographical locations and different socio economical environments. Additionally, Ginting, et al (2020) conducted a preliminary study on the possibility of autonomous learning on Asian students. The study suggested that autonomy among Asian students was very limited and emphasized the need for further research in this area.

While previous research has explored the intervention programmes, activities and materials on developing social skills and indicated positive outcomes of autonomous learning environments on various aspects of academic achievement and personal growth, the relationship between the Autonomous Learner Model and the development of social skills among adolescents remains understudied. Hence, this study seeks to bridge this gap by investigating the potential impact of the Autonomous Learner Model on social skills among secondary school students.

THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

Autonomous Learner Model

The Autonomous Learner Model (ALM) is a comprehensive instructional model developed by Betts and Kercher (2003). ALM consists of five dimensions: Orientation, Individual Development, Enrichment, seminar and In-depth study. It aims to promote the development of autonomous learning skills and socio-emotional competence in students. ALM emphasizes student choice, active involvement in learning, and self-regulation of learning strategies. In the context of this study, implementing ALM will be the intervention or experimental condition to evaluate its impact on enhancing social skill in secondary school students.

Social Skills

Social Skills are a collection of acquired skills that allow an individual to engage proficiently and appropriately in specific social environment. In the present study social skills include skill of concern for others, relationship/friendship skills, communication, self-care/self-control and decision making/problem-solving skills (Sood et al,2012). These skills are vital for student's success in building meaningful relationships, collaborating and adapting to various social contexts. Concern for others refers to the ability to genuinely care for and prioritize the wellbeing of individuals within ones' social circle. It includes the strong emotional bond, support and understanding towards family, friends and peers. Relationship/friendship skill refers to the skill to engage with others in a polite and tactful manner. It indicates one's standing or level of acceptance among a large community or social circle. Communication is the ability to effectively deliver information in a way that is received and comprehended. Communication enables students to learn their thoughts clearly, actively listen to their peers, and articulate their ideas. Self-care/ self-control entails managing one's emotions, behaviour and desires in order to efficiently handle future circumstances. Decision making/problem solving refers a cognitive ability which include assessing probability and thinking systematically or abstractly and the tactful handling of a situation cleverly.

Secondary School students

In the present study, Secondary school students in Kerala are those students enrolled in grade 9 of the Kerala State syllabus.

OBJECTIVES

- To find out the effect of Autonomous Learner Model on the components and total score of social skills among Secondary school students.
- To compare the pre-test and post test scores on the components and total score of Social Skills among Experimental and Control groups.
- To compare the effect of Autonomous Learner Model and existing Activity Oriented Method on the post test score on Social Skills among Secondary school students.

HYPOTHESES

- There exists no significant difference between the means of pre-test scores on components of Social Skills and the total score of social skills among Secondary School students of Experimental and Control Groups.
- There exists no significant difference between the means of pre -test and post test scores of components of Social Skills and the total score of Social Skills among Secondary School students of Experimental and Control Groups.
- There exists no significant difference between Autonomous Learner Model and existing Activity Oriented Method on the post-test total score on social skills among Secondary School students of Experimental and Control Groups.

METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

In the present investigation, investigator used a Pre-test- Post-test Non – equivalent Group design with one Experimental and one Control Group.

B. Participants

The population of the study consisted of Secondary school students of Kottayam district who were enrolled in Kerala State syllabus. The study was conducted during the academic year 2022-2023 with two batches of

ninth-grade students. A random sampling technique was used to select a total of 74 students, 37 of whom were assigned to the control group and 37 to the experimental group. The data were collected from students at Holy Cross Higher Secondary School Cherpunkal, Kottayam, Kerala.

C. Procedure

The investigator designed and implemented a randomized controlled trial to evaluate the effectiveness of the ALM on social skills development in secondary school student. The instructional materials were based on the Autonomous Learner Model (ALM) and the Activity-Oriented Method (AOM). The topics for the treatment were selected from the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) Social Science textbook for standard nine, including units on history and geography. Before the treatment, a pre-test on social skills was administered to both the experimental and control groups. The treatment was then administered for a period of two months.

The experimental group received the ALM treatment, which is based on the following five dimensions: awareness of one's own giftedness, talents, and intelligence, development of social and organizational skills, learning style preference, exploration of topics and preparation of mini products in one's passion area and presentation of one's learning outcomes. The control group received the existing AOM treatment, which is based on constructivist ideas. After the treatment, a post-test on social skills was administered to both the experimental and control groups.

D. Instruments

The investigator used Instructional materials based on Autonomous Learner Model and Activity Oriented method on Social Science of class nine for treatment and Social skill Rating Scale (2012) by Sood, Anand and Kumar for collecting data.

Instructional material based on Autonomous Learner Model

The investigators prepared Instructional material based on Autonomous Learner Model on one unit in History and one unit in Geography for the ninth class students.

Instructional material based on Activity Oriented method

Instructional material on Activity Oriented method based on the same unit used for the experimental group. Social skill Rating Scale (2012) by Sood, Anand and Kumar. The Scale measures social skills in skill of concern for others, relationship/friendship skills, communication skills, self-care/self- control skills and decision making/problem solving skills.

E. Statistical Techniques Used

The investigator used the following Statistical techniques for the study

- Descriptive Statistics: Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation
- Simple Independent Sample t- test

DATA ANALYSIS

TABLE I. Comparison of the Means of Pre-test and post test scores on Social Skills among the students of Control Group

Components	Group	N	M	SD	t value	df	P value
Concern of others	Pre test	37	52.51	7.48	2.46	72	0.016
	Post test	37	58.81	13.68			
Relationship/ Friendship skill	Pre test	37	38.59	6.28	2.33	72	0.023
	Post test	37	42.78	8.96			
Communication	Pre test	37	37.41	6.23	3.02	72	0.004
	Post test	37	42.81	8.93			
Self-care /Self -control	Pre test	37	32.72	5.35	2.59	72	0.011
	Post test	37	37.10	8.73			
Decision making/Problem solving	Pre test	37	29.45	4.42	2.91	72	0.005
	Post test	37	33.19	6.39			
Total	Pre test	37	190.70	25.99	2.89	72	0.005
	Post test	37	214.70	43.17			

The table I shows the comparison of the means of pre-test and post test scores on Social Skills for ninth-grade students in the control group. The obtained t value of Skill of concern for others ($t_{(72)} = 2.46, p < .05$), Relationship/Friendship skills ($t_{(72)} = 2.33, p < .05$), Communication ($t_{(72)} = 3.02, p < .05$), Self-care/self-control ($t_{(72)} = 2.59, p < .05$), Decision making/Problem-solving skills ($t_{(72)} = 2.91, p < .05$), and the total scores on Social Skills are significant at .05 level. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test social skills scores of the participants. This means that the participants' social skills scores improved significantly after intervention.

TABLE II. Comparison of the Means of Pre-test and post test scores on Social Skills among the students of Experimental Group

Components	Group	N	M	SD	t value	df	P value
Concern of others	Pre test	37	53.64	9.40	10.65	72	0.000
	Post test	37	83.29	14.07			
Relationship/ Friendship skill	Pre test	37	37.67	5.18	11.04	72	0.000
	Post test	37	57.29	9.48			
Communication	Pre test	37	37.02	5.03	11.28	72	0.000
	Post test	37	56.45	9.19			
Self-care/Self-control	Pre test	37	33.78	4.78	10.83	72	0.000
	Post test	37	54.72	10.73			
Decision making/Problem solving	Pre test	37	29.75	4.09	9.86	72	0.000
	Post test	37	44.86	8.37			
Total	Pre test	37	191.89	23.18	12.09	72	0.000
	Post test	37	295.56	46.69			

The table II shows the comparison of the means of pre-test and post test scores on Social Skills for ninth-grade students in the Experimental group. The obtained t value of Skill of concern for others ($t_{(72)} = 10.65, p < .05$), Relationship/Friendship skills ($t_{(72)} = 11.04, p < .05$), Communication ($t_{(72)} = 11.28, p < .05$), Self-care/self-control ($t_{(72)} = 10.83, p < .05$), Decision making/Problem-solving skills ($t_{(72)} = 9.86, p < .05$), and the total scores on Social Skills ($t_{(72)} = 12.09, p < .05$), are significant at .05 level. This indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test social skills scores of the participants in the experimental group. This means that the experimental treatment had a significant effect on the social skills scores of the participants. The experimental treatment had a statistically significant positive effect on the social skills scores of the participants.

TABLE III. Comparison of the Means of Pre-test scores on Social Skills among Experimental and Control Groups

Components	Group	N	M	SD	t value	df	P value
Concern of others	Experimental	37	53.64	9.40	0.57	72	0.567*
	Control	37	52.51	7.48			
Relationship	Experimental	37	37.67	5.18	0.68	72	0.495*
	Control	37	38.59	6.28			
Communication	Experimental	37	37.02	5.03	0.29	72	0.775*
	Control	37	37.40	6.23			
Self-care/Self-control	Experimental	37	33.78	4.78	0.89	72	0.375*
	Control	37	32.72	5.35			
Decision making/Problem solving	Experimental	37	29.75	4.09	0.30	72	0.765*
	Control	37	29.45	4.41			
Total	Experimental	37	191.89	23.18	0.208	72	0.836*
	Control	37	190.70	25.99			

*Not significant at .05 level

The table III shows the comparison of the means of pre-test and post test scores on Social Skills for ninth-grade students in the Experimental and Control groups. The obtained t value of Skill of concern for others ($t_{(72)} = 0.57, p > .05$), Relationship/Friendship skills ($t_{(72)} = 0.68, p > .05$), Communication ($t_{(72)} = 0.29, p > .05$), Self-care/self-control ($t_{(72)} = 0.89, p > .05$), Decision making/Problem-solving skills ($t_{(72)} = 0.30, p > .05$), and the total scores on Social Skills ($t_{(72)} = 0.208, p > .05$), are not significant at .05 level. This indicates that there is statistically no significant difference between the experimental and control groups in their pre-test scores. Available online at: <https://jazindia.com>

scores of social skills. This means that the two groups were similar in terms of their social skills before the experiment began.

TABLE IV. Comparison of the Means of Post-test scores on Social Skills among Experimental and Control Groups

Components	Group	N	M	SD	t value	df	P value
Concern of others	Experimental	37	83.29	14.07	7.58	72	0.000
	Control	37	58.81	13.68			
Relationship	Experimental	37	57.29	9.48	6.76	72	0.000
	Control	37	42.78	8.96			
Communication	Experimental	37	56.45	9.19	6.47	72	0.000
	Control	37	42.81	8.93			
Self-care	Experimental	37	54.72	10.73	7.74	72	0.000
	Control	37	37.10	8.73			
Problem solving	Experimental	37	44.86	8.37	6.73	72	0.000
	Control	37	33.18	6.39			
Total	Experimental	37	295.56	46.69	7.73	72	0.000
	Control	37	214.70	43.17			

The table IV shows the comparison of the means post test scores on Social Skills for ninth-grade students in the Experimental and control groups. The obtained t value of Skill of concern for others ($t_{(72)}=7.58$, $p < .05$), Relationship/Friendship skills ($t_{(72)}=6.76$, $p < .05$), Communication ($t_{(72)}=6.47$, $p < .05$), Self-care/self-control ($t_{(72)}=7.74$, $p < .05$), Decision making/Problem-solving skills ($t_{(72)}=6.73$, $p < .05$), and the total scores on Social Skills ($t_{(72)}=7.73$, $p < .05$), are significant at .05 level. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the post-test scores and social skills in the experimental and control groups. This means that the experimental treatment had a significant effect on the social skills scores of the participants.

RESULT

The study examined the impact of the Autonomous Learner Model on Social skills compared with the existing Activity Oriented Method among the students of Standard Nine. The post-test Scores on the Experimental and Control Groups on Social skills, indicate that the Experimental Group scored more than the Control Group. The study revealed that the Autonomous Learner Model is more effective than the existing activity-oriented method in enhancing social skills among Secondary School Students.

FINDINGS

- There exists no significant difference between the Pre-test scores of Experimental and Control Groups on social skills among the Secondary School students.
- There exists a significant difference between the Pre-test and post-test scores of Experimental and Control Groups on social skills among Secondary School students.
- There is a significant difference between the Post-test Scores of the Experimental and Control Group on social skills among the Secondary School students
- The study reveals that the Autonomous Learner Model helps to enhance social skills among Secondary School Students.

DISCUSSION

The study proved that the Autonomous Learner Model is effective in enhancing social skill in Secondary school students. The Pre-test Scores of the components of social skill and total score of social skill is similar in both groups. The Post-test scores of the Control and Experimental groups revealed that the Experimental group scored more than Control Group in Social skills. The findings of Palanisami (2019), Kim (2023), Subramonian et al (2021) substantiate the present study that Social Skills Intervention programmes helps in enhancing social skills. The present investigation conducted to find out the effectiveness of Autonomous Learner Model on Social skills revealed that Autonomous Learner Model enhances students' social skills. The study was supported by the findings of Aladwan (2020) who examined the impact of training program based

on Autonomous Learner Model on developing skills such as communication, management, decision making and problem solving of gifted students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding that Autonomous Learner Model is effective in enhancing the Social Skills among Secondary School Students, the following recommendations are offered

- Teachers should incorporate the Autonomous Learner Model in Social Science class rooms and ensure that students have opportunities to express themselves in their preferred learning styles and interact with peers.
- To assess long term effect of Autonomous Learning Model on enhancing social skills longitudinal studies should be done and more research is needed to determine whether the results are generalizable to other populations and settings.

CONCLUSION

Adolescents experience a desire for independence and autonomy seeking more freedom and responsibility in their lives. The study investigated the effect of Autonomous Learner Model on Social skills in Secondary School students and confirmed the finding that the Autonomous Learner Model is effective in enhancing social skills among Secondary school students. The findings of the study suggest that Autonomous Learner Model is a promising approach for improving social skills among adolescents. ALM-based programs can provide adolescents with opportunities to practice social skills in a safe and supportive environment. ALM-based programs can also help adolescents develop the knowledge and skills they need to navigate complex social situations. Successfully navigating the obstacles can contribute to character growth, resilience, and the development of healthy social skills necessary for adulthood.

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