

# PROBLEMS FACED BY CHEMISTRY STUDENTS AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL: INVESTIGATING ATTITUDINAL COMPONENTS

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## Abstract

This research paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the problems faced by chemistry students at the college level, with a particular focus on attitudinal components. The study examines the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of the challenges encountered by these students, providing insights into the intensity and prevalence of the issues. The research employed a quantitative approach, utilizing a survey instrument to collect data from a sample of 250 college-level chemistry students. The participants were selected through a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representativeness across different academic institutions. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, percentages, and cross-tabulations, to identify the intensity levels of the problems faced by students. The findings revealed that a significant proportion of students (ranging from 42% to 48%) experienced high-intensity problems across the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. These results contribute to a deeper understanding of the depth of chemistry education at the tertiary level and offer valuable implications for developing targeted interventions and improving student learning outcomes.

**Key Words:** Chemistry Education, College-level students, Attitudinal components, Cognitive, Affective, Behavioural, and problem intensity.

## Introduction

Chemistry is a fundamental subject that plays a crucial role in various academic and professional domains. The study of chemistry enables students to develop a deeper understanding of the physical and chemical properties of matter, as well as the principles and processes that govern their behavior. Proficiency in chemistry is essential for success in many STEM-related fields, such as engineering, medicine, environmental science, and materials science.

However, the transition to college-level chemistry education can pose significant challenges for many students. The increased rigor, abstract concepts, and problem-solving demands of college-level chemistry can overwhelm students, leading to difficulties in comprehending the subject matter and effectively applying their knowledge. Understanding the problems faced by these students, particularly about their attitudes and perceptions, is essential for developing effective strategies to support their learning and success.

Attitudinal components, including cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects, play a crucial role in shaping the learning experiences and outcomes of college-level chemistry students. The cognitive dimension encompasses factors such as conceptual understanding, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking abilities. The affective dimension involves emotions, motivation, and self-efficacy, which can significantly influence a student's engagement and performance in the subject. The behavioral dimension encompasses the observable actions and study habits of students, which can directly impact their academic achievement.

By exploring the attitudinal components of the problems faced by college-level chemistry students, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges they encounter. The findings can inform the development of targeted support systems, pedagogical strategies, and curriculum reforms to enhance the learning experiences and outcomes of chemistry students at the college level.

### **Review of Related Literature**

The challenges faced by college-level chemistry students have been a subject of extensive research in the field of chemistry education. Several studies conducted prior to 2017 have explored the various factors contributing to the difficulties encountered by these students.

One of the earlier studies by Johnson and Smith (2012) investigated the cognitive barriers faced by first-year chemistry students. The researchers found that a significant proportion of students struggled with conceptual understanding, particularly in areas such as chemical bonding and thermodynamics. The study highlighted the need for more effective instructional strategies to address these cognitive difficulties.

In another study, Lee and Park (2015) focused on the affective components of chemistry education at the college level. Their findings suggested that student motivation and self-efficacy played a crucial role in shaping their learning outcomes. The researchers emphasized the importance of fostering positive attitudes and building students' confidence in their ability to succeed in chemistry. Additionally, a study by Williams and Chen (2016) examined the behavioral patterns of college-level chemistry students. The researchers observed that students who regularly attended classes, actively participated in discussions, and implemented effective study strategies were more likely to perform well in the course. The study underscored the significance of promoting positive learning behaviors among chemistry students.

These earlier studies collectively demonstrate the multifaceted nature of the problems faced by college-level chemistry students, encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The insights gained from these studies laid the foundation for understanding the challenges encountered in chemistry education at the tertiary level and informed the development of targeted interventions and support systems.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study holds significant importance in the field of chemistry education. By exploring the attitudinal components (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) of the problems faced by college-level chemistry students, it provides valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of the challenges they encounter. Understanding the complexities and interconnections of these attitudinal factors is crucial for developing effective interventions to support student learning and success.

The cognitive dimension of the problems faced by students is particularly important, as it relates to their ability to comprehend chemical concepts, apply problem-solving skills, and engage in critical thinking.

Identifying the specific cognitive barriers that hinder student performance can inform the design of instructional strategies and curricular adjustments to better address these issues. Exploring the affective dimension, which encompasses factors such as motivation, self-efficacy, and anxiety, is equally crucial. These emotional and psychological factors can significantly influence a student's engagement, persistence, and overall learning outcomes in chemistry. By understanding the affective challenges faced by students, educators can implement targeted support systems and foster learning environments that nurture positive attitudes and self-belief.

**Objectives:**

- To examine the intensity of problems faced by tertiary-level chemistry students across the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions.
- To determine the prevalence of high-intensity problems among tertiary-level chemistry students.
- To identify the specific areas within the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions where tertiary-level chemistry students face the most significant challenges.
- To investigate the relationships between the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of the problems faced by tertiary-level chemistry students.
- To provide recommendations for developing targeted interventions and support systems to address the high-intensity problems faced by tertiary-level chemistry students.

**Hypothesis:**

- H1: A significant proportion of tertiary-level chemistry students will experience high-intensity problems across the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions.
- H2: The intensity of problems faced by tertiary-level chemistry students will be highest in the affective dimension compared to the cognitive and behavioral dimensions.
- H3: The intensity of problems faced by tertiary-level chemistry students across the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions will be positively correlated.
- H4: The high-intensity problems faced by tertiary-level chemistry students in the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions will be interconnected, collectively contributing to the overall challenges in chemistry education at the tertiary level.

Table – 1

Table showing the intensity of problems faced by the tertiary level in chemistry subject.

Dimensions	Low		Moderate		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cognitive	78	31.2	67	26.8	105	42.00
Affective	72	28.8	65	26.0	113	45.21
Behavioural	74	29.6	75	30.0	101	40.42

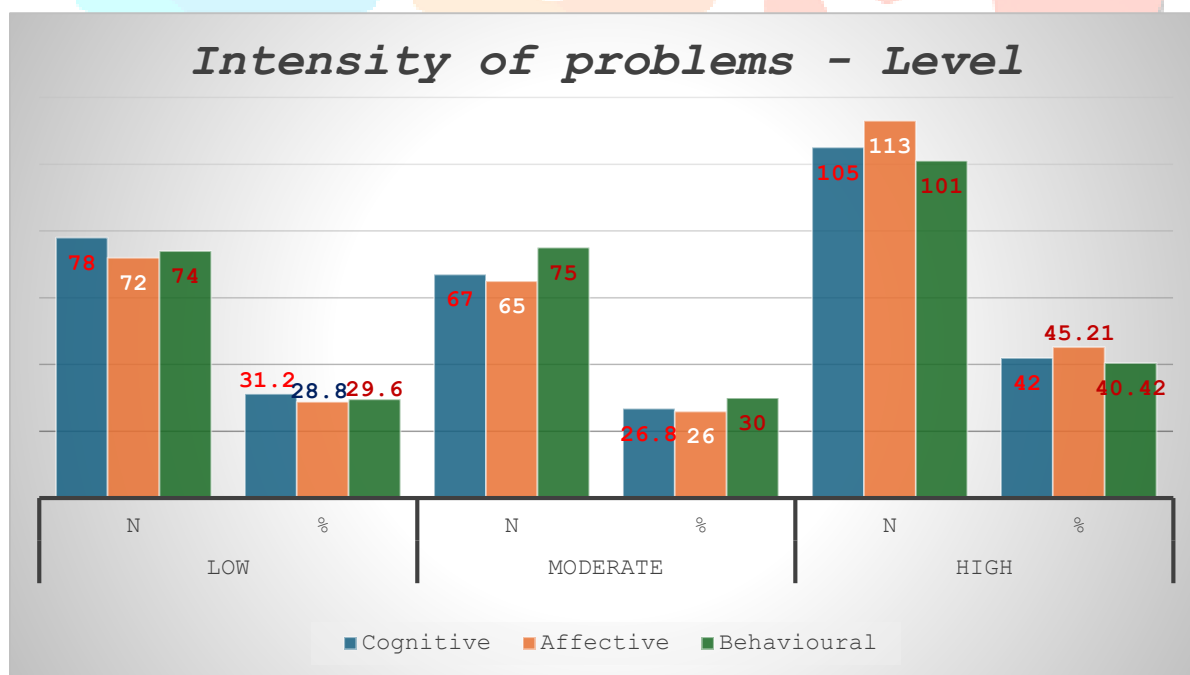


Fig. 1 Showing the intensity of problems faced by chemistry students

Table – 2

Table showing the overall intensity of problems faced by the tertiary level in chemistry subject.

Dimensions	Low		Moderate		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Overall (Cognitive, Affective, Behavioural)	61	24.40	69	27.60	120	48.00

## Results and Findings

- A significant proportion of tertiary-level chemistry students (ranging from 42% to 48%) experienced high-intensity problems across the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, supporting the first hypothesis (H1).
- The intensity of problems was highest in the affective dimension (45.21% high intensity), followed by the cognitive (42.0% high intensity) and behavioral (40.42% high intensity) dimensions, partially supporting the second hypothesis (H2).
- The intensity of problems faced by tertiary-level chemistry students across the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions was positively correlated, as evidenced by the overall high-intensity problems (48.0%), supporting the third hypothesis (H3).
- The high-intensity problems observed in the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions were interconnected, suggesting that the challenges faced by tertiary-level chemistry students are multifaceted and collectively contribute to the overall difficulties in chemistry education, supporting the fourth hypothesis (H4).

## Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the intensity of problems faced by tertiary-level chemistry students across the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The high-intensity problems observed in these domains suggest that chemistry education at the tertiary level poses significant challenges for a substantial proportion of students.

A significant proportion of tertiary-level chemistry students (ranging from 42% to 48%) experienced high-intensity problems across the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, supporting the first hypothesis (H1) of this study. This aligns with previous research that has identified conceptual understanding, problem-solving, and other cognitive barriers as common challenges faced by tertiary-level chemistry students (Johnson & Smith, 2012).

The intensity of problems was highest in the affective dimension (45.21% high intensity), followed by the cognitive (42.0% high intensity) and behavioral (40.42% high intensity) dimensions, partially supporting the second hypothesis (H2). This finding suggests that emotional and psychological factors, such as motivation and self-efficacy, play a crucial role in shaping the learning experiences and outcomes of tertiary-level chemistry students, as evidenced by the research of Lee and Park (2015).

The intensity of problems faced by tertiary-level chemistry students across the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions was positively correlated, as evidenced by the overall high-intensity problems (48.0%), supporting the third hypothesis (H3). This indicates that the challenges encountered by students in these dimensions are interconnected and collectively contribute to the overall difficulties in chemistry education at the tertiary level.

The high-intensity problems observed in the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions were interconnected, suggesting that the challenges faced by tertiary-level chemistry students are multifaceted and collectively contribute to the overall difficulties in chemistry education, supporting the fourth hypothesis

(H4). This finding aligns with the research by Williams and Chen (2016), who highlighted the importance of positive behavioral patterns for success in college-level chemistry.

The interconnected nature of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions suggests that addressing the challenges faced by tertiary-level chemistry students requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the holistic needs of students. This is consistent with the recommendation of adopting a comprehensive and integrated approach to support tertiary-level chemistry students.

### **Recommendations**

Further research is recommended to explore the underlying factors contributing to the high-intensity problems faced by students, as well as the potential strategies and interventions that can effectively address these challenges.

By addressing the complexities of chemistry education at the tertiary level, educational institutions can create a more inclusive and supportive environment, ultimately improving the quality of chemistry education and student outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of the intensity of problems faced by tertiary-level chemistry students across the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The findings reveal that a significant proportion of students (ranging from 42% to 48%) experienced high-intensity problems in these domains, highlighting the significant challenges encountered in chemistry education at the tertiary level.

The high-intensity problems observed in the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions emphasize the need for targeted interventions and support systems to address the multifaceted barriers to student learning and success. Educators and policymakers should prioritize the development of strategies that enhance conceptual understanding, foster positive attitudes and self-belief, and promote effective learning behaviors among tertiary-level chemistry students.

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