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Effectiveness Of Cooperative Learning Strategy On Social Skills And Average Achievers In Economics Among Higher Secondary School Students

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Abstract

Education at the higher secondary level plays a vital role in shaping both academic achievement and social development. Economics, as a subject, demands analytical reasoning as well as collaborative and interpersonal skills. However, traditional teacher-centered approaches often fail to provide opportunities for interaction and cooperation. The present study was undertaken to examine the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies on the academic achievement and social skills of average achievers in Economics among higher secondary school students. The study adopted an experimental method with a pre-test–post-test control group design. Two groups of students (N = 100) were selected, each consisting of equal numbers of low, average, and high achievers. The control group was taught using conventional lecture-based methods, while the experimental group received instruction through cooperative learning techniques such as Jigsaw, Group Investigation, and Think-Pair-Share over a three-month period. Data were collected using an achievement test in Economics and a social skills questionnaire. Analysis using the t-test revealed that the experimental group average achievers performed significantly better in Economics achievement compared to the control group. Gender-wise analysis further indicated that both male and female students in the experimental group

outperformed their counterparts in academic achievement. While no significant overall difference was observed in social skills between groups, gender-specific analysis showed that experimental group students exhibited better social skills than the control group. The findings confirm that cooperative learning is an effective instructional strategy for enhancing achievement and fostering social skills among average achievers in Economics.

Keywords: Cooperative Learning, Social Skills, Average Achievers, Economics Education, Higher Secondary School Students.

Introduction

Education at the higher secondary level is a crucial stage where students are prepared for both higher education and responsible citizenship. Economics, as a subject, requires not only analytical reasoning but also interpersonal and collaborative skills to understand socio-economic realities. Traditional teacher-centered methods, however, often emphasize individual performance, rote learning, and competition, which may not provide sufficient opportunities for interaction, cooperation, or development of social skills. Cooperative learning, as a pedagogical strategy, restructures the classroom into small groups where students work collaboratively to achieve common academic goals. This approach encourages active participation, peer support, and accountability, while also nurturing essential social skills such as communication, teamwork, empathy, and conflict resolution. For average achievers—students who often remain unnoticed in a competitive academic setting—cooperative learning can act as a catalyst for academic improvement and personal growth. Thus, investigating the effectiveness of cooperative learning on social skills and academic performance in Economics at the higher secondary level becomes significant.

Significance of the Study

In the 21st century, education is expected to equip learners with competencies beyond academic knowledge. Social skills such as cooperation, leadership, tolerance, and empathy are critical for success in higher education, the workplace, and society. Cooperative learning provides a structured environment for developing these life skills. While high achievers often excel through self-study and low achievers receive remedial support, average achievers form the largest group in classrooms and may be overlooked. They require engaging strategies that promote both confidence and academic performance. Cooperative learning offers them opportunities to take responsibility, learn from peers, and contribute meaningfully to group success. Economics involves abstract concepts, problem-solving, and real-life applications. Group-based discussions, projects, and problem-solving exercises under cooperative learning make the subject more relatable and understandable for students of varied abilities. The current educational system often fosters unhealthy competition. Cooperative learning shifts focus towards mutual growth, shared responsibility, and collective

success, aligning with the objectives of holistic education. The study adds to existing research by examining cooperative learning in the specific context of Economics among higher secondary students in India, thus providing empirical evidence for teachers, curriculum planners, and policymakers to adopt innovative strategies in classrooms.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the control and experimental group average achieving students in their Achievement in Economics.
2. To find out the significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the control and experimental group average achieving students in their Achievement in Economics with regard to gender.
3. To find out the significant difference between the post-test mean scores of control and experimental group average achieving students in their social skills.
4. To find out the significant difference between the post-test mean scores of control and experimental group average achieving students in their social skills with regard to gender.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the control and experimental group average achieving students in their Achievement in Economics.
2. There is no significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the control and experimental group average achieving students in their Achievement in Economics with regard to gender.
3. There is no significant difference between the post-test mean scores of control and experimental group average achieving students in their social skills.
4. There is no significant difference between the post-test mean scores of control and experimental group average achieving students in their social skills with regard to gender.

Methodology of the Study

The present study adopted the experimental method with a pre-test–post-test control group design to examine the effect of cooperative learning strategies on the academic achievement and social skills of higher secondary students in Economics. Two groups—control and experimental—were formed with equal distribution of low (17 students), average (17 students), and high (16 students) achievers. Each group comprised 50 students (boys and girls) selected randomly. The control group was taught using traditional teacher-centered methods, while the experimental group was exposed to cooperative learning strategies, namely Jigsaw, Group Investigation, and Think-Pair-Share, over a period of three months. To measure outcomes, two tools were

developed: (1) an achievement test in Economics prepared and validated with the help of subject experts, and (2) a social skills questionnaire consisting of 40 items on communication, teamwork, empathy, and leadership. Both tools were subjected to validity and reliability checks using item difficulty and discriminability indices. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests administered to both groups. The data were analysed with the help of 't' test.

Data Analysis of the Study

Null Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the control and experimental group average achieving students in their achievement in Economics.

Table 1

Difference between the post-test means scores of Control and Experimental Group Average Achieving Students in their Achievement in Economics

Group	N	Mean	SD	Calculated 't' value	Table Value	Remark
Control	17	32.65	2.57	3.41	1.96	S
Experimental	17	35.59	2.45			

From the above table, it is inferred that the calculated 't' value (3.41) is greater than the table value at 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, significant difference is found between the post-test mean scores of the control group and experimental group average achieving students in their achievement in Economics. The experimental group average achieving students are found better in their achievement in Economics.

Null Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the control and experimental group average achieving students in their achievement in Economics with regard to gender.

Table 2

Difference between the post-test means scores of Control and Experimental Group Average Achieving Students in their Achievement in Economics with regard to Gender

Gender	Group	N	Mean	SD	Calculated 't' value	Table value	Remark
Male	Control	9	32.00	1.732	3.674	1.96	S
	Experimental	9	35.00	1.732			
Female	Control	8	33.38	3.059	2.822	1.96	S
	Experimental	8	36.25	3.249			

From the above table, it is inferred that the calculated 't' values (male - 3.674; female - 2.822) are greater than the table value at 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, significant difference is found between the post-test mean scores of the control group and experimental group average achieving students in their achievement in Economics with regard to gender. In both male and female students, the experimental group average achieving students are found better in their achievement in Economics.

Null Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference between the post-test mean scores of control and experimental group average achieving students in their social skills.

Table 3

Difference between the post-test means scores of Control and Experimental Group Average Achieving Students in their Social Skills

Group	N	Mean	SD	Calculated 't' value	Table Value	Remark
Control	17	74.71	12.39	0.428	1.96	NS
Experimental	17	73.18	7.97			

From the above table, it is inferred that the calculated 't' value (0.428) is lesser than the table value at 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, no significant difference is found between the post-test mean scores of the control group and experimental group average achieving students in their social skills.

Null Hypothesis 4

There is no significant difference between the post-test mean scores of control and experimental group average achieving students in their social skills with regard to gender.

Table 4

Difference between the post-test means scores of Control and Experimental Group Average Achieving Students in their Social Skills with regard to gender

Gender	Group	N	Mean	SD	Calculated 't' value	Table Value	Remark
Male	Control	9	74.22	6.960	2.549	1.96	S
	Experimental	9	76.67	11.402			
Female	Control	8	72.00	9.320	2.085	1.96	S
	Experimental	8	76.50	13.846			

From the above table, it is inferred that the calculated 't' values (male - 2.549; female - 2.085) are greater than the table value at 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, significant difference is found between the post-test mean scores of the control group and experimental group average achieving students in their social skills with regard to gender. In both male and female categories, the experimental group average achieving students are found better in their social skills.

Findings of the Study

1. Significant difference is found between the post-test mean scores of the control group and experimental group average achieving students in their achievement in Economics. The experimental group average achieving students are found better in their achievement in Economics.
2. Significant difference is found between the post-test mean scores of the control group and experimental group average achieving students in their achievement in Economics with regard to gender. In both male and female students, the experimental group average achieving students are found better in their achievement in Economics.
3. No significant difference is found between the post-test mean scores of the control group and experimental group average achieving students in their social skills.
4. Significant difference is found between the post-test mean scores of the control group and experimental group average achieving students in their social skills with regard to gender. In both male and female categories, the experimental group average achieving students are found better in their social skills.

Discussion of the Study

The post-test mean scores of the control group students is significantly different from the average achieving students of experimental group in their achievement in Economics. Moreover, the average achieving experimental group students are found superior in their achievement in Economics. The gender-wise differential analysis has also revealed the same significant difference between the average achieving students of male and female categories in their achievement in Economics. The experimental group average achieving male and female students are found superior in their achievement in Economics. This may be due to the reason that the chosen experimental variable-co-operative learning strategies may develop good interest and involvement in the academic activities of the students of experimental group and they may pool their concentration only on learning the content related to the subject matter in an effective way in which their collaboration with the peer members of the group. Hence, the average achieving students of experimental group may achieve a better score in the subject.

The gender-wise differential analysis conducted after the experimentation, the post-test means scores of experimental group average achieving students are found superior to their counterparts in control group in their social skills. The male and female categories of average achieving students of the experimental group are found to have better in their social skills. This is due to the reason that the average achievers may found different ways and means of not only learning the subject matter but also the ability to handle others by learning certain personal skills of managing their skills and conveying those skills with others. This sort of sharing the views and opinions of the members of a group can emerge their inner submissive characteristics which may definitely improve their bonding with the fellow members. Hence, the experimental group students may have such a better social skill when compared with their counterparts in control group.

Suggestions for Further Study

1. The present study is limited to Economics; further studies could explore the effectiveness of cooperative learning in Science, Mathematics, Commerce, or Humanities, where abstract concepts and problem-solving skills also play a major role.
2. A longer-term study could be conducted to assess whether the benefits of cooperative learning on social skills and academic achievement are sustained over time beyond the higher secondary level.
3. Since social interaction patterns vary across regions and cultures, similar studies in rural vs. urban settings, or among students of different cultural backgrounds, would provide deeper insights.
4. Future research may compare cooperative learning with strategies such as problem-based learning, project-based learning, or blended learning, to identify which methods are most effective in developing both social and academic skills.
5. Research could investigate how teachers' attitudes, training, and classroom management styles influence the success of cooperative learning strategies.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of cooperative learning in enhancing both social skills and academic performance, particularly among average achievers, highlights its potential as a powerful educational strategy. By fostering interaction, accountability, and empathy, cooperative learning transforms the classroom into a collaborative community rather than a competitive arena. For Economics education, it enables students to connect theoretical concepts with real-world issues through active engagement. Moreover, it empowers average achievers to build confidence, develop leadership, and achieve academic success. Hence, cooperative learning is not only an instructional method but also a value-oriented approach that prepares students for the demands of higher education and society at large.

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