

## The level of social skills among university students and its impact on their psychological solidity and adaptive behavior

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### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received Nov 9, 2024

Revised May 5, 2025

Accepted Jun 12, 2025

#### Keywords:

Adaptive behavior

Positive psychology

Psychological solidity

Social skills

University students

### ABSTRACT

Positive social behavior is one of the most important characteristics of humans on this planet. Through these behaviors, the individual shows his sympathy for others and his desire to help them. Therefore, the current study aimed to know the level of social skills among university students and their impact on their psychological solidity and adaptive behavior. To achieve the study objectives, the descriptive analytical approach was used in its implementation. The scale of positive social behavior, psychological solidity, and adaptive behavior was applied to a random sample of 370 male and female students from private universities in Jordan. The study concluded that the level of positive social behavior among students reached 3.49, which is within the average level, and that female students enjoy a high level of social skills compared to university students. The results also indicated a statistically significant effect of the level of social skills on both psychological solidity and adaptive behavior among university students. Positive social behavior also works to provide support between individuals in cases that require support or in difficult situations, which increases their psychological solidity and adaptive behavior. This confirms the effective role of social behaviors in improving both the level of psychological solidity and adaptive behavior among university students.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A person needs a set of social skills that facilitate communication and interaction with his surroundings in his relentless search for self-realization and the achievement of his aspirations and hopes [1]. Social skills enter every aspect of an individual's life [2]. They also affect his ability to form social relationships with his peers, teachers, and important adults [3]. In addition, social skills are directly related to the assertive behavior of individuals, such as self-care and environmental care, as well as the social skills and concepts that people learn to be able to interact with their daily lives, as the deficiency in adaptive behavior affects the daily lives of individuals, and thus affects their social interaction [4]. While the loss of these skills leads directly to social deviation and exposure to many mental health problems in later stages of life, weak social skills are considered a direct cause of the behavioral problems that individuals may suffer from in the future [5].

The importance of social skills is also evident in terms of their association with mental health at a certain time for individuals [6]. As Sakız *et al.* [3] showed that, there is increasing evidence about the

importance of these emotions from a physical and health perspective as well. Moreover, the concept of the nature of the interaction between social skills and temperamental skills from the point of view of emotional interaction is that individuals tend to create a social-emotional environment that helps the individual succeed in terms of emotional competence associated with social competence [7]. Because of this importance, members of the social and emotional education foundation in 1977 set various basic skills for social and emotional skills, which are communicating effectively [8]. The ability to cooperate with others, emotional self-control and appropriate expression, taking a sympathetic perspective, optimism, humor and self-awareness including strength, the ability to plan and set goals, and solve problems and resolve conflicts rationally [9].

Therefore, any early deficiency in these skills may lead to a negative impact that accumulates on the individual's personality and all stages of his education. Students' social problems negatively affect their self-esteem, personal satisfaction, growth, and positive attitudes towards learning [1]. Therefore, university professors must take an active role in helping students acquire, develop, and dissolve the social skills necessary for important social relationships and interactions in their lives [10]. Individuals with high social skills are more aware of the wide range of alternatives available when responding than those who have a deficit in social skills [11]. The psychological heritage emphasizes the link between deficiencies in social skills and many emotional and behavioral disorders, especially depression, despair, and feelings of psychological loneliness [4]. It has been shown that an individual's lack of successful social interaction skills with others and the inability to express feelings pushes him to withdraw and feel isolated, unacceptable, and helpless, and thus the individual's resistance weakens, and he collapses under the pressure of any pressures he may be exposed to in his daily life [7].

In addition, the decreased ability to express feelings leads to psychological disorders. A study has shown that the inability to show negative feelings such as anger leads to psychological disorders [12]. Moreover, the failure to show positive feelings, according to Caredda *et al.* [13], weakens our relationship with others. Also, if a person's ability to say "no" decreases due to fear of others, he may be exposed to acting according to deviant behaviors. This is why a number of researchers have confirmed that the pressures of others are important factors in many deviant behaviors [14]. In short, depression, social isolation, drug abuse, and social problems are problems associated with a decrease in adaptive behavior [15], which usually occurs in the context of social interaction [16]. In addition, the inability of the individual to respond successfully to requirements according to the individual's chronological age is likely to weaken his ability to behave adaptively in the social context [17]. Furthermore, the inability of the individual to bear everything related to his personal affairs succeed in them and make the appropriate decision in them [18]. It is one of the behaviors that indicates an individual's inability to adapt behaviorally to others [19].

The individual's bearing of social responsibility, which means the individual's ability to successfully perform the expected social roles and bear the responsibility resulting from performing those roles, as well as social and emotional maturity when making the appropriate decision [20]. It is one of the important indicators of the individual's enjoyment of sufficient behavioral adaptation [21]. This gives him a degree of psychological solidity in the face of life's crises and pressures, meaning that the individual's acquisition of social skills and continuous training on them works to develop them from time to time [22]. Successful social relationships are considered an integral part of self-assertion and the ability to achieve goals [23], [24]. Hence, the aim of the study appears to identify the level of social skills among university students and their impact on their psychological solidity and adaptive behavior. This is done by answering the following main question: Is there an effect of the level of social skills among university students on their psychological solidity and adaptive behavior? Therefore, the importance of this study stems from the fact that students' social skills are considered one of the most directly observable behaviors on the ground. They can be measured using many available and easy-to-apply scales, which allows us to identify many latent behaviors in students, such as psychological solidity and adaptive behavior in university students.

This study is a contemporary study that examines the interaction of psychological and social factors in the lives of university students. It seeks to explore the impact of the relationship between university students' social skills and their psychological resilience and adaptive behavior. The study focuses on the importance of developing social skills in enhancing the ability to cope with the psychological and social challenges they face during their university years, which may affect their mental health and ability to adapt in diverse environments. By analyzing these relationships, the study aims to provide a comprehensive view of the role of social skills in improving psychological resilience and adaptive behavior, paving the way for the development of strategies that support students' well-being and enhance their ability to adapt to the pressures of university life.

## 2. METHOD

The descriptive analytical approach was used in conducting this study; this is done by collecting data from the study sample members using the research tool, then describing the phenomenon statistically through arithmetic means and standard deviations, and then analyzing the data to determine the statistical effect through the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test, and the simple random sampling method was used in selecting and appointing the study individuals from private university students in Jordan, by distributing the study tools to them, which were represented by the social skills scale, the psychological solidity scale, and the adaptive behavior scale. After verifying their validity and reliability using Google Forms, in cooperation with university professors in those universities, the data obtained were then analyzed using appropriate statistical tests, which were represented by arithmetic means, standard deviations, and the ANOVA test.

### 2.1. Respondent

The study sample consisted of 410 students from private universities in Jordan from different governorates. The simple random sampling method was followed in selecting them, with the help of faculty members in those universities over a period of two weeks. The number of students who responded to the study tools was 370 university students. Adam [25] believes that the sample size of this study is representative and can be used as a quantitative research sample.

### 2.2. Research instruments

The current study relied on collecting data from the study sample individuals on a questionnaire consisting of three dimensions, simulating the main variables of the study: social skills, psychological solidity, and adaptive behavior of university students. The development of these tools was based on social and psychological theories with a cognitive curve [26]. It was found that social skills are among the most important cognitive behaviors that contribute to reducing negative behaviors among university students [27]. Adaptive behavior is a behavior related to personal relationships and includes honest and direct expression of personal thoughts and feelings. It is therefore socially appropriate behavior, as a person who behaves adaptively takes into account the feelings and rights of others [28]. Psychological solidity shows the individual's ability to adapt to daily challenges and difficulties and deal with frustration, mistakes, and psychological trauma [29]. Thus, developing realistic goals and the ability to deal with others more positively [30]. In light of developing the current study tool, the gender variable (female and male) and scientific specialization (scientific and humanities) were added. As one of the indicators that need to be measured, the secondary variables of the level of social skills among university students and their impact on their psychological solidity and adaptive behavior are gender and scientific specialization. The independent variable is social skills and the dependent variables are psychological solidity and adaptive behavior, as shown in Figure 1.

Accordingly, the study tool consisted of 30 paragraphs, ten paragraphs for each main variable, all of which achieved indicators of validity and reliability to measure the level of social skills among university students and their impact on their psychological solidity and adaptive behavior. The tool validity test uses content validity and its standards, while the reliability test uses Cronbach's alpha based on Adam [25]. Table 1 shows the results of the validity and reliability tests. Table 1 shows the results of the validity and reliability of the tool used in this study. According to the table, all paragraphs that make up the tool are valid and acceptable for application to the individuals of the study sample. Thus, it can be asserted that the data obtained are highly reliable, and because of this, the tool can be used to reach results that are free of bias and ambiguity.



Figure 1. Conceptual framework of social skills and psychological solidity and adaptive behavior

### 2.3. Data analysis

The descriptive analytical method was used to identify the level of social skills among university students and its impact on their psychological solidity and adaptive behavior. The reliability and validity of the data were verified before conducting the statistical analysis process. Then answer the study questions using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

Table 1. Test results of the research instrument

| SN | Indicator                                             | Value     | Decision |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|
| 1  | Number of items                                       | 30        |          |
| 2  | Correlation coefficient of items with the total score | 0.72-0.68 | Reliable |
| 3  | Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items          | 0.92      | Valid    |

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Results

Table 2 shows the distribution of the study sample, which consisted of 370 male and female students from private universities in the various governorates of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The study sample members were classified according to gender (male and female) and field of specialization (scientific and humanities). According to Table 2, females dominated the answers with 198 female students, representing 53.5% of the total. They were followed by male students with 172 male students, representing 46.5% of the total. In addition, Table 2 shows that female students have a higher level of social skills compared to male university students. There were 170 university students whose social skills were within the normal level. Only two male students had a high level of social skills. While 194 female students had a high level of social skills. Only four female students had a normal level of social skills. Through this, the conclusion was reached that female students have a higher level of social skills compared to males. Table 2 also shows that the level of social skills of students studying humanities differs significantly from the level of social skills of students studying science. This can be attributed to the fact that the nature of humanities requires building relationships and social interaction more than science, which requires more effort and time from students. Consequently, they do not have enough time to raise their level of social skills.

Table 2. Distribution of responses of the study sample members

| Demographics         |            | Low (%)  | Normal (%)  | High (%)    | Freq (%)   |
|----------------------|------------|----------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Gender               | Male       | 0 (0.00) | 170 (45.95) | 2 (0.54)    | 172 (46.5) |
|                      | Female     | 0 (0.00) | 4 (1.08)    | 194 (52.43) | 198 (53.5) |
| Specialization field | Scientific | 0 (0.00) | 178 (48.10) | 7 (1.89)    | 185 (50)   |
|                      | Humanist   | 0 (0.00) | 6 (1.62)    | 179 (48.38) | 185 (50)   |

However, it was found that the level of social skills among university students in Jordan was average or high. This indicates that male and female students have either a normal or high level of social skills and the same applies to different academic specializations. However, it was found that there was a statistically significant effect of the level of social skills on both psychological solidity and adaptive behavior among them. As shown in the following Table 3.

Table 3 shows that there is a statistically significant effect of the level of social skills possessed by university students on both psychological solidity and adaptive behavior. This result can be inferred from the (F) test value, which came to 445.616 for the psychological solidity variable with a significance level (sig.) less than (0.05), and 479.157 for the adaptive behavior variable with a significance level (sig.) less than (0.05). This confirms that the social skills possessed by students, as one of the components of positive psychology and which appear through their daily behaviors, have a clear impact on their psychological solidity and adaptive behavior, students having a high level of social skills are likely to improve this type of psychological factors in them.

Table 3. One way ANOVA for the level of social skills in both psychological solidity and adaptive behavior

| Variables              | Source of variance | Sum of squares | df  | Mean square | F       | Sig.  |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------|
| Psychological solidity | Between groups     | 9759.343       | 10  | 975.934     | 445.616 | 0.000 |
|                        | Within groups      | 786.238        | 359 | 2.190       |         |       |
|                        | Total              | 10545.581      | 369 |             |         |       |
| Adaptive behavior      | Between groups     | 9604.459       | 10  | 960.446     | 479.157 | 0.000 |
|                        | Within groups      | 719.598        | 359 | 2.004       |         |       |
|                        | Total              | 10324.057      | 369 |             |         |       |

#### 3.2. Discussion

The results of the statistical analysis show that female students have a higher level of social skills than male students do [31]. This result confirms what was reached in Raines study [1], which showed that female students have a higher ability to communicate socially than males, which makes them have a high level of social skills. In this regard, Abdullah [4] revealed that females tend to help socially, and do not feel

ashamed to assist their colleagues, because they have high self-confidence that allows them to deal with all social circumstances and events and makes them more integrated into society. Agustina and Setiawan [8] also showed that the better the social skills of students, the better their academic self-efficacy, which enhances their social integration in the university environment, increases their opportunities to learn from peers, and supports their independence, which improves their level of social skills. Yedemie and Yidegi [2] also showed that the level of social skills is closely related to a student's ability to use open phrases when talking to others, as well as giving the other party a full opportunity to speak and express their point of view. This includes encouraging the speaker to continue where he/she is going and not picking up on his/her mistakes, paying full attention to his/her speech and not ignoring it [13]. If the other party speaks something incomprehensible, "I respond to him/her to silence him/her," and "I do not intentionally criticize others negatively for what they say" [18]. This requires understanding the feelings of others and empathizing with them while continuing to respond to others so that they know that their message has been received in the best possible way [23].

Having social skills is one of the most important factors for success in life in general [6]. No matter what field of study or the profession you want to work in, at some point you will have to communicate with others [8]. A person may have to work on group projects or may need some feedback from a colleague [23]. They may also have to deal directly with their professors [18]. This increases students' ability to adapt behaviorally with others and increases their level of psychological solidity [32]. It also helps a person in dialogue, seeking information, accepting rejection and criticism, and expressing positive feelings and praise [30]. It also includes dealing calmly and balanced with personal problems, self-advocacy, and personal rights [14]. Social skills are also an essential element in a student's success [6]. When students know how to communicate their ideas, listen to what others say, and cooperate with others, it becomes easier for them to achieve success in the classroom and in life, all of which help them acquire adaptive behavior skills and enhance their psychological solidity [22].

Psychological solidity is a set of personal characteristics that help an individual effectively confront stress. It consists of commitment, control, and challenge [12]. These characteristics help maintain the individual's mental and physical health, despite exposure to stressful events [21]. Thus, the individual is one of the individuals who exhibit positive behaviors within society [18]. This confirms that psychological solidity is one of the variables that are affected by and influence positive social behaviors [17]. Because commitment is one of the most important characteristics of psychological solidity, the individual's enjoyment of this characteristic makes him create a kind of psychological contract that the individual is committed to towards himself, his goals, his values, and others, i.e., he behaves in a positive social manner with them [15]. The individual's belief that he can control the events he encounters and bear personal responsibility for what happens to him, as well as his ability to make decisions, the ability to interpret events, and the ability to effectively confront stress, makes him a positive person who adopts all forms of positive social behavior [14]. The individual's belief that the change that occurs in aspects of his life is exciting and necessary for growth rather than a threat to him, which helps him to think, explore the environment, and know the psychological and social sources that help him to confront pressures effectively is also one of the things that appear in his positive social behaviors [13].

Social skills are also important elements that determine the nature of an individual's daily interactions with those around him in different contexts, which, if they are efficient, are a manifestation of psychological and social compatibility [2]. Social skills play an important role in the extent of an individual's success in establishing efficient social interaction with others and his ability to continue this interaction [1]. The decline in these skills explains the failure that some individuals suffer from in practical life situations despite their high mental abilities. The matter often does not stop at the limits of poor social interaction and low adaptive behavior, but may go beyond that to a lack of effectiveness in the social environment of individuals who suffer from low social skills, such that they fall prey to mental illness in its various forms and degrees [8].

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the level of social skills among university students in Jordan was average or high. This indicates that male and female students have either a normal or a high level of social skills that female students have a higher level of social skills than male students do, and that students in scientific specializations have a higher level than students in humanities specializations in positive social behavior. The results also indicated a statistically significant effect of the level of social skills on both psychological solidity and adaptive behavior among university students, regardless of gender, and specialization. This confirms the effective role of social behaviors in improving both the level of psychological solidity and adaptive behavior among university students.

The high level of social skills among students enables them to interact and communicate with others, and through them, social norms and relationships appear in several verbal and non-verbal forms. Social skills also enable individuals to accomplish tasks in the required manner and achieve the goals required of them, or that they set for themselves, as well as achieve the common goals that an individual can set with others. Social skills enable individuals to provide support in situations that require support or in difficult situations, which increases their psychological solidity and adaptive behavior. Therefore, a high level of social skills will positively affect the psychological state of students, which will improve their academic level. Consequently, students will be more able to absorb the knowledge and information they study at university. This could be one of the components of educational policy in these universities. The presence of a positive impact on social skills requires universities to modify their educational policies to be compatible with such skills, in terms of improving them and integrating them into the educational process. Therefore, this study recommends conducting future studies related to measuring the impact of social skills on psychological solidity and adaptive behavior among university students, in the presence of other variables such as age, economic level, and social status.

### FUNDING INFORMATION

No funding is involved.

### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT REFERENCES

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| Name of Author   | C | M | So | Va | Fo | I | R | D | O | E | Vi | Su | P | Fu |
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C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

E : Writing - Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

No conflict of interest.

### INFORMED CONSENT

We obtained informed consent from all individuals in this study.

### ETHICAL APPROVAL

The research related to human use has been complied with all the relevant national regulations and institutional policies by the tenets of the Helsinki Declaration and has been approved by the authors' institutional review board or equivalent committee.

### DATA AVAILABILITY

Derived data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author [HMAZ], on request.

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