

An Analysis of Influences of Standardized Testing for Students' Developments Under the Social and Emotional Skills

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Abstract: The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has prioritized social and emotional competence in recent years, primarily to address the question of what sort of individuals society will foster in the face of uncertainties and the future. Social and emotional skills (SES) are fundamental abilities that enable people to effectively navigate social situations, comprehend and control their emotions, and form wholesome relationships. Academic achievement, personal growth, and general well-being all depend on these abilities. This paper analyses the impact of standardized testing on human development from the perspective of Social-Emotional Skills, and from five perspectives: task performance, emotional regulation, collaboration, open-mindedness and engaging with others. By scrutinizing standardized exam results, this study endeavors to propose more effective strategies for enhancing social and emotional competencies, thereby fostering holistic personal growth. Although standardized exams can boost task execution and teamwork, they tend to impede emotional control, flexibility in thought, and the ability to engage interpersonally. This underscores the necessity of adopting strategies like fostering critical thinking, encouraging mindfulness, and nurturing empathy to counteract these negative effects and to bolster the growth of social and emotional competencies.

Keywords: Social and emotional skills, Standardized testing, OECD, Social and emotional learning, Social Emotional Competence

1. Introduction

This paper argues for the ongoing application of standardized testing while underscoring the critical role of social and emotional competencies in student development. It is hoped that future educational practices will devote greater attention to fostering students' social and emotional skills. The development of abilities such as empathy is emerging as a fundamental component of holistic education, conferring numerous advantages. This paper is structured into four distinct sections. The opening section provides a concise overview of the theoretical framework that underpins this study. The subsequent section delves into the merits of Standardized Testing(ST), examining its impact on self-management and responsible decision-making within the context of Social and Emotional Skills(SES) theory. The third section scrutinizes the shortcomings of Standardized Testing(ST) across the remaining three dimensions. Finally, the concluding section presents actionable recommendations,

informed by the preceding evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses. Based on the research of Onwuegbuzie and Kathleen [1], this paper adopts the qualitative analytical approach.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1. Social and Emotional Skills

Social and emotional skills encompass a range of competencies, often referred to by various terms such as 21st-century skills, soft skills, or lifelong learning abilities [2]. These include employability skills, character strengths, non-cognitive skills, personality traits, soft skills, transformative abilities, and lifelong learning skills, which are all crucial for achieving milestones like academic success, professional growth, and mental health. The OECD framework for SES assists policymakers in identifying factors that promote or hinder the development of these skills while assessing their distribution among student populations [3,4].

2.2. Standardized Testing

Standardized testing evaluates students, educators, and educational institutions through uniform assessments designed for consistency in administration and scoring; however, there are notable variations in how these tests are conceived, structured, administered, and utilized around the globe [5]. The term "standardized test" refers to assessments that are formulated externally, with the intention of ensuring uniformity in the testing environment, questions, scoring methods, and interpretations across different schools [6]. These assessments are generally administered to large cohorts of students simultaneously for a range of purposes, with the resulting data being employed for various forms of assessment and evaluation.

3. Positive Influences of ST for Students' Developments Under SES

This chapter conducts a comprehensive analysis of the facilitative impact that standardized testing exerts on students' developmental trajectories, particularly focusing on two critical dimensions: task performance and collaboration. Through a thorough examination of empirical studies and theoretical frameworks, this sector aims to elucidate the significant role that standardized testing plays in shaping the educational experiences and outcomes of learners.

3.1. Promoting Task Performance

Standardized testing fosters critical skills such as problem-solving, time management, and resilience, which are vital for both academic and professional success. Task performance encompasses a multifaceted approach to engaging in various activities, characterized by active participation that not only reflects an individual's commitment but also underscores a sense of responsibility toward the completion of assigned tasks. This engagement is not merely passive; rather, it requires a proactive attitude that fosters an environment conducive to learning and personal development. Individuals who exhibit high levels of task performance demonstrate an ability to persist in the face of challenges, showcasing resilience and determination. These competencies are instrumental not only in scholastic achievements but also in excelling professionally. As shown in the Figure 1 that come from OECD[7], there is a positive correlation between math, reading, etc. Research by Von Stumm, Hell, and Chamorro-Premuzic link these task execution abilities to better academic and vocational outcomes. Moreover, a recent OECD assessment has unearthed substantial evidence suggesting that these skills, especially self-discipline, can be nurtured within an educational environment [8].

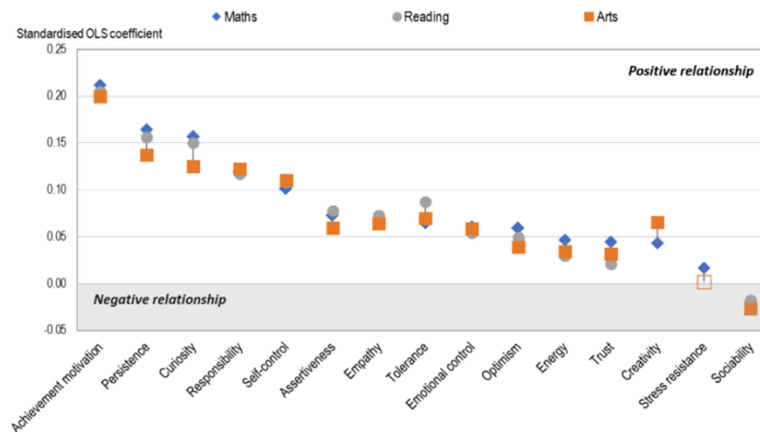


Figure 1: Standardised regression coefficients of individual skills on math, reading and arts grades, average across sites

Note: Significant coefficients at a threshold of $p < 0.05$ are coloured, non-significant coefficients are outlined. Models control for gender, socio-economic status, migrant status and school fixed effects. Academic grades for Ottawa(Canada) and arts grades for Delhi(India) are not available.

Source: OECD, SSSES 2023 Database Tables B4.1, B4.4 and B4.7

3.2. Promoting Collaboration

Collaboration involves intertwined elements including emotional resonance, trust, and collective synergy, and the combination of them makes collaboration a multidimensional skill integral to SES.

Students exhibiting increased levels of tolerance, empathy, and trust are more likely to excel academically, as shown in higher grades and consistent attendance (refer to Figures 1 and 2[7]). These individuals are receptive to a variety of perspectives and values, show genuine concern for others, and generally operate with the assumption that people have positive motives.

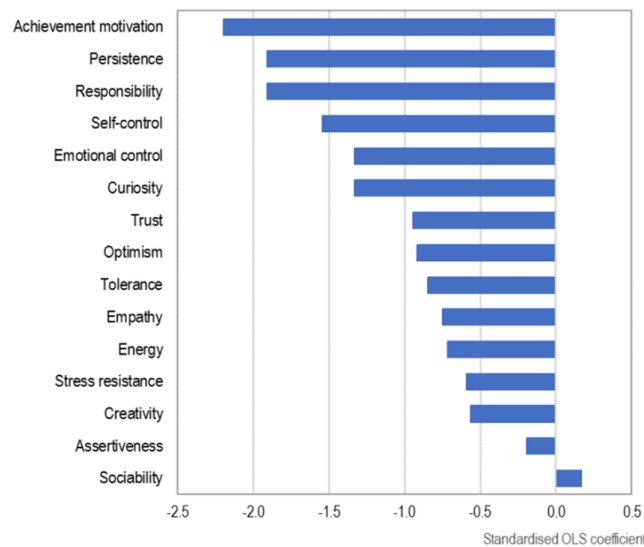


Figure 2: Standardised regression coefficients of individual skills on students' absenteeism and tardiness, average across sites

Note: All coefficients are statistically significant with a threshold $p < 0.05$. Models control for gender, socio-economic and migrant status. See Annex A for information about how the student's absenteeism and tardiness index was calculated. Higher scores on the absenteeism and tardiness index indicate higher levels of these behaviours.

Source: OECD, SSSES 2023 Database Table B4.13

4. Negative Influences of ST on SES Development

The shackles of standardized testing on students' growth are not only reflected in the fact that it kills the budding of students' sense of emotional regulation and the building of a learning community but also in its destruction of students' open-mindedness. Even more concerning, this examination subconsciously hinders the development of students' ability to communicate with others in depth. Beneath this seemingly fair evaluation system lies an incalculable educational cost.

4.1. Hinder Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation is a critical psychological construct that refers to an individual's ability to manage and modulate their emotional responses in various situations.

Standardized testing reveals a disturbing picture of the trauma and emotional distress that students experience as a result of these assessment mechanisms [9]. Despite the existence of so many personal narratives of test stress, mainstream education systems often normalize these assessments as routine, potentially suppressing students' ability to manage emotions under pressure. Myruski and Dennis-Tiway [10] contended that detrimental impacts of stress on both one's overall well-being and mental health become apparent when there's a mismatch between the stress levels' intensity and one's emotional regulation capabilities, particularly in terms of spontaneity, adaptability, and resource distribution.

4.2. Hider Open-mindedness

Open-mindedness is a multidimensional personality characterized by intellectual curiosity and a willingness to explore new ideas, is stifled by rigid, uniform curricula. This intrinsic driving force prompts people to relentlessly pursue and question, deconstruct existing thinking patterns with keen insight.

Education that conforms to a uniform, cookie-cutter model fails to cultivate individual personal growth and development. This approach inherently imposes a standardized curriculum that prescribes the precise knowledge and skills each student is mandated to acquire, thereby undermining the unique learning needs and interests of diverse learners. As noted by Swan [11], this one-size-fits-all methodology not only disregards the varied backgrounds, experiences, and cognitive styles of students but also limits their ability to explore and develop their own intellectual curiosities

4.3. Reducing Engagement with Others

Engaging with Others is a complex art that requires a delicate balance of sociability, self-confidence and energy. The so-called sociability is essentially a person's tolerance and willingness to communicate with people from all over the world who hold different views.

Throughout the social scene, self-confidence is undoubtedly the core driving force for effective participation. When a person has a healthy self-perception, he or she is able to express his or her insights with ease, and at the same time listen to others with an open and tolerant mindset.

For non-native language students, preparation materials and additional academic support are lacking due to different cultural backgrounds. And it can lead to different interpretations of the same thing [12].

5. Suggestions on Standardized Testing

Cognitive standardized tests should focus on helping students build a sense of overall understanding rather than focusing solely on student achievement. Combining the overall quality of students with

their achievements in helpful in establishing correct cognition. Through training their mindfulness,, students can learn to control and regulate emotions.

Setting specific questions on standardized tests and instruct students to answer questions through critical thinking can help students develop a spirit of inquiry, emphasizing evidence-based inquiry, forming logic in inquiry, and remaining rational.

Empathy Building: Incorporate activities that enhance empathy and compassion for oneself and others, fostering more meaningful interactions.

6. Conclusion

This paper has explored the impact of standardized testing on social and emotional competencies through qualitative analysis. While standardized tests can promote skills like task performance and collaboration, they also impose constraints on emotional regulation, open-mindedness, and interpersonal engagement. Addressing these limitations requires a shift in testing practices and educational priorities. However, this study's reliance on literature review and observational methods, rather than empirical testing, underscores the need for further research to validate these findings and expand the discourse on SES in education.

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