



# INTERACTIVE EFFECT OF SOCIAL LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION AND GENDER ON EMPATHY AND COOPERATION AND TEAMWORK IN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

**Ms. Mandrita Anirban Mitra**

Research Scholar, Bombay Teachers' Training College, Mumbai  
Assistant Professor at Royal College of Education and Research for Women.

**Prof. (Dr.) Rajeev Indramani Jha**

Research Supervisor and Professor at Bombay Teachers' Training College, A Constituent of HSNC University, Mumbai.

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## ABSTRACT

Life skills are the essential 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to adapt and thrive in society effectively. School as a formal education agency plays an important role in imparting Life Skills education to equip young citizens with life skills. NEP 2020, the new education policy that aims to reform Indian Educational Structure, emphasises on integrating life skills in all the levels of formal education of the country. Integrating life skills into the school curriculum can equip every learner to deal with challenges confidently. The present study aims to identify the interactive effect of life skills education program and gender on empathy and cooperation and teamwork skills among secondary school students of standard VIII. For this purpose, an intervention programme on social life skills education was structured and implemented. The study employed a quasi-experimental design with an experimental group and a control group - with a pre-test and a post-test, for comparison. The study revealed that the intervention programme was found to be effective in enhancing empathy and cooperation and teamwork skills. The study also revealed the influence of gender on empathy.

**KEYWORDS:** Life Skills Education, NEP 2020, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, Gender, Empathy, Cooperation, and Teamwork.

## INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to bring dynamic reform in the Indian Education system from the grassroots level to the tertiary level.

NEP 2020 vision to instil a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen (**National Education Policy, 2020**).

The vision of NEP 2020 has laid down different recommendations to revamp the present education system. Imparting 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to the learners of the present generation is one of the major recommendations. Life skills are the major 21<sup>st</sup> century skills which are instrumental for the holistic development of the learners. It will prepare the youth to meet the diverse national and global challenges of the present and the future.

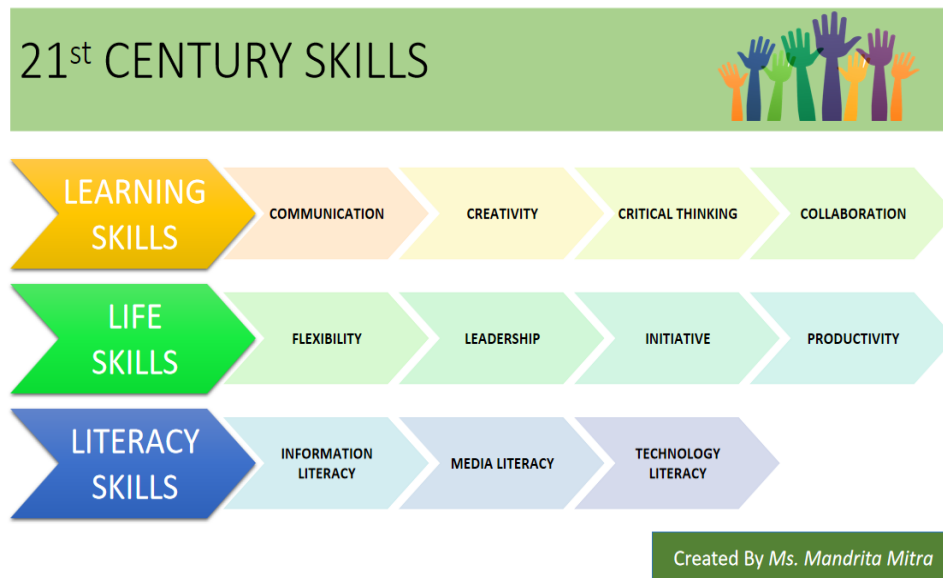
## NEP 2020 AND SKILLED BASED EDUCATION

Skill Based Education allows the learners to get hands-on experience with real-world exposure. They learn to apply theoretical knowledge to communicate and solve problems in their daily life. NEP 2020 in one of its salient features advocates reformation of school curricula and pedagogical practices which

directs the stakeholders to integrate value-based and skill-based education in the present school curricula. The promotion of skill-based education is also aligns to the vision of NEP 2020.

## 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS AND LIFE SKILLS

Inculcation of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills is a multidimensional approach to the learning experience to empower students. NEP-2020 has emphasised on integration of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills in the Indian Education System. The major three skills are: Learning Skills, Life Skills and Literacy Skills, which are again bifurcated as follows:



**Fig. 1: 21st Century Skills**

Life Skills are one of the major skills of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills which equip an individual in social adaptability. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) Program on Mental Health 1997, the life skills are, 'the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.' Adaptive denotes that an individual is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different societal circumstances. Positive behaviour reflects the perspective of an individual to look forward to in difficult situations.

### NEED OF THE STUDY

Adolescence is the stage of life that indicates vigour, resourcefulness, new aspirations, social responsiveness and dynamic reflections. The adolescents are full of energy. They are always ready to take part in social activities for a better cause. They need to be well groomed with social skills which will enable them to be an effective citizen not only of a particular country but of the entire world. The present teaching professionals need to pay attention in this area and need to be proactive in catering to social life skills. The researcher, while working as internship supervisor of B.Ed programme in state government schools, found that in-service teachers are having very basic knowledge regarding life skills and are not keen enough to integrate them in their daily teaching-learning practices. Moreover, the researcher found that these teachers are not have in-depth knowledge and information about NEP-2020. They are failing to cater to 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills which are the need of the hour. Keeping this need in mind the researcher attempted to structure a user-friendly module on social life skills of empathy and cooperation and teamwork. The lesson plans are structured and executed on standard VIII students



of Maharashtra State Board for Secondary and Higher Secondary Education. The collected data of pre-test and post-test were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistical analysis.

## REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The review of the related literature was done on the selected variables of the study.

Another interesting study of (Wu et al., 2024) on 'Empathy and Cooperation Vary with Gender in Chinese Junior High School Adolescent,' revealed adolescents' empathy had a facilitative effect on their cooperative propensity and cooperative behaviour, with empathy being more predictive of cooperation for males than their counterpart. The researchers conducted three studies to reach the above findings by adopting an experimental research methodology. In the first study they explored the relationship between adolescents' empathy and cooperative propensity. The second study was conducted to verify the relationship of study 1 and to identify gender differences. The third study explored the effect of empathy on cooperative behaviour from empathic perspective and examined the role of gender. The study found to be significant for generalising the empathy-altruism hypothesis and recognising the gender differences in the influence of empathy on social interaction. The study is also significant in encouraging the implementation of cooperative education among adolescents from the empathic perspective.

A survey research study on Life Skills Education was done by (Antony & Tripathi, 2023) who developed an online digital survey tool (google form) to collect data from 770 respondents from 17 different states. They adopted descriptive and inferential data analysis which indicated the three top most life skills are self-awareness, problem solving and communication according to the respondents. The data analysis revealed that region, type of schools and gender of the respondents have no significant role to play regarding the choices of the three top most life skills to be focused first. However, the designation of the respondents and years of experience in schools found to be significantly associated with the choice of the top three life skills. This study will help the teachers, the principals and the policymakers to keep note of the perception and choices of the teaching community on life skills.

A descriptive research was conducted by (Pandit & Chavan, 2022) on Life Skills Key to Transform Students' WorldView: Investigation of Life Skills in Secondary School Pupils,' to study the status of life skills in secondary school students with respect to gender. The researchers adopted a survey method to collect the data. The data analysis revealed that the students have average life skill overall, but poor thinking skills compared to social and emotional skills. The study also revealed that there is no difference between boys and girls with respect to life skills.

The Role of Pedagogy in Developing Life Skills was studied by (Gupta, 2021) to find out the role of pedagogy in developing life skills as 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The study also aimed to identify how life skills can be incorporated in the school/university curriculum. The researcher adopted an exploratory method to collect the data. Based on data analysis, the researcher opined to bring reformation in the formal education system and in teacher preparation courses.

Team building is one of the major 21<sup>st</sup> century skills along with critical thinking. Plotnikova & Strukov (2019) obtained both quantitative and qualitative data by conducting a research study on 'Integration of Teamwork and Critical Thinking Skills in the process of Teaching Students', revealing that team learning is very effective in developing critical thinking skills in higher education students.

Interactive effect of Gender and Life Skills Education Programme (LSEP) was studied by (Mansuri, 2018) on the topic, Interaction Effect of Cognitive Life Skills Education Programme and Gender of Marginalised Students on Their Decision-Making, and found the Decision-Making skills scores of the students of the experimental group are higher than the scores of the control group. The study also revealed that the decision-making of marginalised adolescent students was not influenced by gender.



She concluded that LSEP, designed by her, was effective in enhancing decision-making skills among the students of marginalised groups. She suggested both the parents and the teachers encourage the students to make correct choices and decisions for an adaptive healthy life.

The intervention programme on social life skills is capable of enhancing social and emotional skills like empathy, interpersonal relationship and communication skills to reduce violence and bullying of the school students was studied by (Silva et al., 2018). The researcher conducted a quasi-experimental study on 78 students who were bullying victims. A Cognitive Behavioural Intervention based on social skills was conducted with the intervention group that is an experimental group. The analysis revealed that social skills are very much effective in anti-bullying intervention programmes and can be the basis for intersectoral interventions in the health area.

Life Skills Education (LSE) can help to bring positive behavioural changes, reflected in the study conducted by (Chhadva & Kacker, 2013). The researchers took 400 school students of 14-16 years out of 200 were provided with LSE and 200 were not provided with LSE. Descriptive data analysis was done. Data was collected by questionnaire on selected life skills. Data analysis revealed that LSE supports the adolescents' life challenges efficiently.

From the above research studies in India and Abroad, it is evident that social life skills like empathy, team building, self-awareness, interpersonal relationship, communication skills are very much important life skills which can be inculcated and enhanced through a sound Life Skills Education Programme.

In the present study following are the variables:

**Independent Variable (IV) (Experimental Treatment):**

The Life Skills Education Program (Social Life Skills)

**Dependent Variable (DV)**

Social Skills:

- a. empathy
- b. cooperation and teamwork

**Moderator Variable (MV)**

- a. gender of the students

**Operational definition:**

**Life Skills Education Program (social skills)**

Life Skills Education Program (LSEP) is a training program which focuses on cultivation of personal life skills and supports children to reach their full potential. It is an approach to train and enhance the social skills of students who are undergoing puberty and prepare them to face the challenges of societal life. In the present study the researcher has developed and implemented a Life Skills Intervention Program (LSIP) to cater certain social life skills among the secondary school students of standard VIII.

**EMPATHY**

Empathy refers to the ability to understand and share feelings with others in relation to the cognitive and affective domain. It is measured by obtaining the score of a student on the Basic Empathy scale (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006).

## COOPERATION AND TEAMWORK (CT)

It refers to the ability of an individual to collaborate and work with others to achieve the goal. It is measured by obtaining a score of a student on the Cooperation and Teamwork Scale structured by the researcher.

## GENDER

Gender is the state of being male and female of an individual which is framed and stereotyped by the socio-cultural perspective of the society. In the present study the researcher has included both male and female gender in the sample.

## AIM OF THE STUDY

To study the interaction effect of the experimental treatment and gender of the students on the students' gains in scores on:

1. empathy
2. cooperation and teamwork

## Objectives:

To study the interactive effect of the experimental treatment and gender on students':

1. empathy
2. cooperation and teamwork

## Hypothesis

There is no significant interactive effect of the experimental treatment and gender on students':

1. empathy
2. cooperation and teamwork

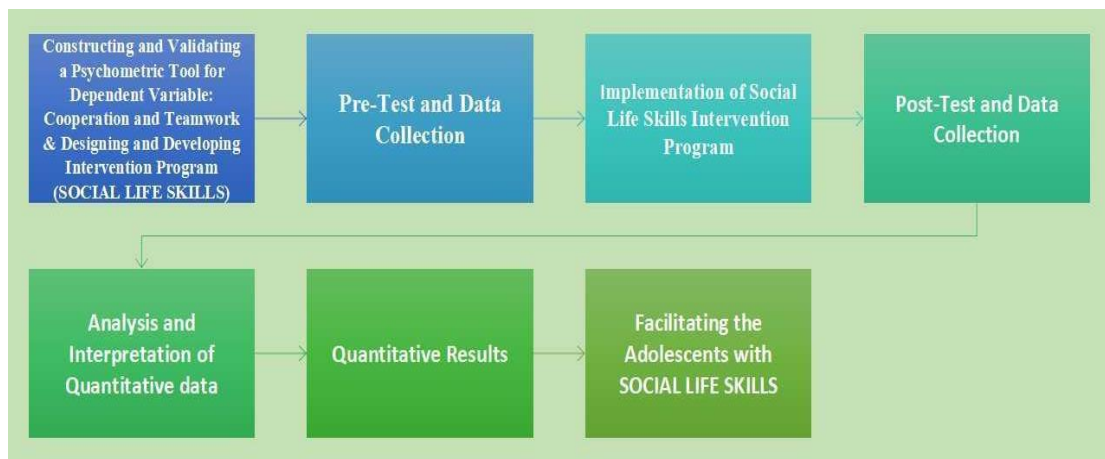


Fig. 2. Diagrammatic representation of phases of the study (source: self)

## TOOLS OF THE STUDY

In the present study besides the personal data sheet, following two tools were used by the researcher:

1. Basic Empathy Questionnaire by Jolliffe and Farrington. 2006a.
2. Self-structured Scale on Cooperation and Teamwork



## INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

The researcher dealt with three selected social life skills viz: i. empathy and ii. cooperation and teamwork. These were included in the life skills intervention programme (experimental treatment). The programme aimed to create an awareness related to social skills and enhanced the social skills of the students. In order to achieve these, the researcher used few interactive and innovative techniques such as:

1. Role play
2. Games
3. Puppetry
4. Group discussion and group presentation
5. Extempore
6. Cooperative learning techniques
7. Situational talks
8. Collaborative learning
9. Individual speech
10. Case study
11. Pantomime
12. Tableau

## SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

In the present study the researcher used a three-stage sampling procedure for selecting the sample.

### Stage I:

The researcher first listed out the population of Secondary schools situated in Mira-Bhayandar Municipal Corporation (MBMC). After that the researcher listed out the secondary schools which are affiliated to Maharashtra State Board. Moreover, among these schools, only English Medium and co-education schools of same educational and socio-economic status were selected by using **purposive sampling technique**.

### Stage II:

At the second stage of sampling, a **simple random technique** was used to select the schools for control group and experimental group. By using a lottery system four schools were selected, two each for the experimental as well as the control groups.

### Stage III:

At the third stage, intact one division (one section of std. VIII) was selected from these selected 4 schools using **cluster sampling technique**.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

In the present study the researcher used Quasi-Experimental Design. The design was of Pre-Test-Post-Test Non-Equivalent Group Design.

$O_1 X O_2$                        $O_3 C O_4$

$O_1$ & $O_3$ : pre-test (Treatment given)





O<sub>2</sub> & O<sub>4</sub>: post-test (No treatment given)

X = experimental group

C = control group

The following methodology was selected for the study. The researcher adopted the quasi-experimental method. In the present study, quasi-experimental design of the Pre-Test - Post-Test, non-equivalent group type was used. It can be described as follows:

O<sub>1</sub> X O<sub>2</sub>                      O<sub>3</sub> C O<sub>4</sub>

O<sub>1</sub> & O<sub>3</sub>: pre-test (Treatment will be given)

O<sub>2</sub> & O<sub>4</sub>: post-test (No treatment will be given)

X = experimental group

C = control group

Total number of the lessons were 24 of 25 hrs in the experimental group. No such treatment was given in the control group.

**FACTORIAL DESIGN**

In the present study the interaction effect of the independent variable with the moderator variable was studied.

The researcher used the factorial design to study the interaction effect of the Life Skills Education Programme with student’s gender on their social skills in the present study.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:**

Inferential Data Analysis is done to test the Null Hypothesis.

**NULL HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY**

There is no significant interactive effect of the experimental treatment and gender on students’:

1. empathy
2. cooperation and teamwork

The statistical techniques applied:

1. Two-way ANOVA
2. t-test.

**Testing of Null Hypotheses**

There is no significant interactive effect of the experimental treatment and gender on students’:

- A. empathy

The variance estimates involve dividing the sums of squares by their respective degrees of freedom. F-ratio for interaction effect involves the ratio of ‘interaction variance’ and ‘within sets variance’. The F-ratio for gender involves dividing the gender variance by ‘within sets variance’. The F-ratio for treatment involves dividing the ‘treatment variance’ by ‘within sets variance’.

**Table No.1. Analysis Variance of Empathy by Treatment and Gender**

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-Value	F-Critical	L.O.S
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<b>Rows (Gender)</b>	747.11	1	747.11	14.02	0.00	6.82	0.01
<b>Columns (Treatment)</b>	2550.25	1	2550.25	47.86	0.00	6.82	0.01
<b>Interaction (Row X column)</b>	23.36	1	23.36	0.44	0.51	6.82	0.01
<b>Within (Error)</b>	7460.17	140	53.29				
<b>Total</b>	10780.89	143					

**Interpretation and Conclusion of Table No.1:**

**I. F for Gender = 14.02**

From the preceding table it is seen that at level of significance (L.O.S) = 0.01

$P = 0.00$ , thus  $p < 0.01$  and

$F (= 14.02) > F \text{ Critical } (= 6.82)$

The obtained F is greater than the F Critical (table) value.

Therefore, the F ratio is statistically significant.

Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Conclusion**

There is a statistically significant effect of Gender on students' Empathy.

**II. F for Treatment = 47.86**

From the preceding table it is seen that at level of significance (L.O.S) = 0.01

$P = 0.00$ , thus  $p < 0.01$  and

$F (= 47.86) > F \text{ Critical } (= 6.82)$

The obtained F is greater than the F Critical (table) value.

Therefore, the F ratio is statistically significant.

Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Conclusion**

There is a statistically significant effect of Treatment on students' Empathy

**III. F for Interaction = 0.44**

From the preceding table it is seen that at level of significance (L.O.S) = 0.01

$P = 0.51$ , thus  $p > 0.01$  and

$F (= 0.44) < F \text{ Critical } (= 6.82)$

The obtained F is lesser than the F Critical (table) value.

Therefore, the F ratio is not statistically significant.

Hence, the null hypothesis is supported.



### Conclusion

There is no statistically significant interaction effect of Gender and Treatment on students' Empathy.

### Overall Conclusion:

There is a statistically significant effect of gender as well as treatment on students' Empathy. However, there is no statistically significant interaction effect of Gender and Treatment on students' Empathy.

Hence t-tests for Gender and treatment Main Effect are required to be done as F Main Effects are Significant.

**Table no. 2. Significance of Mean Differences of Empathy by Gender**

N O.	GROUP S	MEAN (Post Test)	VARIANCE	OBS	df	t Stat	P (T<=t) two- tail	t Critical two-tail	L.O.C
1	EG: GIRLS	82.67	34.69	36	70	5.28	0.00	2.65	0.01 (Sig.)
	CG: GIRLS	73.44	75.11	36					
2	EG: BOYS	77.31	39.48	36	70	4.49	0.00	2.65	0.01 (Sig.)
	CG: BOYS	69.69	63.88	36					
3	CG: GIRLS	73.44	75.11	36	70	1.91	0.00	2.65	0.01 N.S
	CG: BOYS	69.69	63.88	36					
4	EG: GIRLS	82.67	34.69	36	70	3.74	0.00	2.65	0.01 (Sig.)
	EG: BOYS	77.31	39.48	36					
5	EG: GIRLS	82.67	34.69	36	70	7.84	0.00	2.65	0.01 (Sig.)
	CG: BOYS	69.69	63.88	36					
6	EG: BOYS	77.31	39.48	36	70	2.16	0.00	1.98	0.05 (Sig.)
	CG: GIRLS	73.44	75.11	36					

**Table No. 2: Interpretation and Conclusion**

From the preceding table wherein, the t-test is used to compare Mean Empathy of students with respect to gender, it is found that:

1. Girls of EG have a statistically significantly higher Mean Empathy as compared to the girls of CG.
2. Boys of EG have a statistically significantly higher Mean Empathy as compared to the boys of CG.
3. There is no statistically significant difference in the Mean Empathy of girls and boys in CG.

4. However, girls of EG have a statistically significantly higher Mean Empathy than the boys of EG.
5. Girls of EG have a statistically significantly higher Mean Empathy as compared to the boys of CG.
6. Boys of EG have a statistically significantly higher Mean Empathy as compared to the girls of CG.
7. EG has a statistically significantly higher Mean Empathy as compared to CG.

### Conclusion

The preceding analyses show that treatment has an effect on students' Empathy; thus, girls and boys of EG have statistically significantly greater Mean Empathy than their counterparts of CG; however, girls of EG have statistically significantly greater Mean Empathy to boys of EG.

Thus, gender seems to have an effect in enhancing the Empathy of students along with treatment.

**Table no. 3. Significance Difference in the post-test scores of the students in the control group and experimental group on their Empathy**

Variable	Groups	Obs (N)	Mean	Variance	df (n-2)	t Stat	P(T<=t) two-tail	t Critical	L.O.S
Empathy (EMP)	Experimental Group (EG)	72	79.99	43.84	142	6.63	0.00	2.61	0.01 (sig)
	Control Group (CG)	72	71.57	72.08					

### Interpretation and Conclusion of Table No. 3

From the preceding table, it is seen that at L.O.S = 0.01 and df = 142,

p=0.00. thus.  $p < 0.01$  and

t Stat (= 6.63) > t Critical (= 2.61)

The obtained t ratio is greater than the t critical (table) value,

Therefore, the t ratio is statistically significant.

Hence, the null hypothesis is not supported. Thus, it is rejected.

### Conclusion

There is a statistically significant difference in the post-test scores of Empathy of the control group and the experimental group.

### Testing of Null Hypothesis

There is no significant interactive effect of the experimental treatment and gender on students':

- b. Cooperation and Teamwork

**Table No. 4. Analysis Variance of Cooperation and Teamwork by Treatment and Gender**

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-Value	F-Critical	L.O.S
Rows	604.34	1	604.34	3.61	0.06	6.82	0.01

<b>(Gender)</b>							
<b>Columns (Treatment)</b>	8695.56	1	8695.56	51.90	0.00	6.82	0.01
<b>Interaction (Row X column)</b>	27.56	1	27.56	0.16	0.69	6.82	0.01
<b>Within (Error)</b>	23456.19	140	167.54				
<b>Total</b>	32783.65972	143					

**Interpretation and Conclusion of Table No. 4:**

**I. F for Gender = 3.61**

From the preceding table it is seen that at level of significance (L.O.S) = 0.01

$P = 0.06$ , thus  $p > 0.001$  and

$F (= 3.61) < F \text{ Critical } (= 6.82)$

The obtained F is lesser than the F Critical (table) value.

Therefore, the F ratio is not statistically significant.

Hence, the null hypothesis is supported.

**Conclusion**

There is no statistically significant effect of Gender on students' Cooperation and Teamwork

**II. F for Treatment = 51.90**

From the preceding table it is seen that at level of significance (L.O.S) = 0.01

$P = 0.00$ , thus  $p < 0.001$  and

$F (= 51.90) > F \text{ Critical } (= 6.82)$

The obtained F is greater than the F Critical (table) value.

Therefore, the F ratio is statistically significant.

Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Conclusion**

There is a statistically significant effect of Treatment on students' Cooperation and Teamwork.

**III. F for Interaction = 0.16**

From the preceding table it is seen that at level of significance (L.O.S) = 0.01

$P = 0.69$ , thus  $p > 0.001$  and

$F (= 0.16) < F \text{ Critical } (= 6.82)$

The obtained F is lesser than the F Critical (table) value.

Therefore, the F ratio is not statistically significant.

Hence, the null hypothesis is supported. Thus, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

## Conclusion

There is no statistically significant interaction effect of Gender and Treatment on students' Cooperation and Teamwork.

### Overall Conclusion:

There is a statistically significant effect of treatment on students' Cooperation and Teamwork. However, there is no statistically significant interaction effect of Gender and as well as Gender and Treatment on students' Cooperation and Teamwork.

Hence t-test for treatment Main Effect is required to be done as F Main Effects are Significant.

**Table No. 5: Significance Difference in the post-test scores of the students in the control group and experimental group on their Cooperation and Teamwork**

Variable	Groups	Obs (N)	Mean	Variance	df	t Stat	P(T<=t) two-tail	t Critical	L.O.S
Empathy (EMP)	Experimental Group (EG)	72	170.32	115.57	142	7.16	0.00	2.61	0.01(sig)
	Control Group (CG)	72	154.78	223.70					

### Interpretation and Conclusion of Table No. 5:

From the preceding table, it is seen that at L.O.S = 0.01 and df = 142,

$p = 0.00$  thus.  $p < 0.01$  and

$t \text{ Stat} (= 7.16) > t \text{ Critical} (= 2.61)$

The obtained t ratio is greater than the t critical (table) value,

Therefore, the t ratio is statistically significant.

Hence, the null hypothesis is not supported. Thus, it is rejected.

### Conclusion

There is a statistically significant difference in the post-test scores of cooperation and teamwork of the control group and the experimental group.

### Conclusions and Suggestions

The above inferential data analysis reveals that Gender differences have a significant effect on the dependent variable Empathy whereas no significant effect on Cooperation and Teamwork which leads to conclude that girls were much more responsive towards the activities on empathy than their counterpart. The treatment has a significant effect on the students in enhancing their social skills of Empathy and Cooperation and Teamwork.

The schools should integrate social skills of Empathy and Cooperation and Teamwork to foster these 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills among the students. A well-structured module on integration of these social skills should be adopted and training should be given to the in-service as well as pre-service teachers to integrate these skills in scholastic and co-scholastic activities of the school. It is the high time that the stakeholders take initiatives to frame a curriculum integrating life skills. The government initiatives



are required to train the teachers throughout the country for successful integration of life skills in all forms and levels of education.

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