

A Case Study on Social Intelligence Among College Students in Jorhat District of Assam

Dipen Patra*, Madhu Monjuri Gohain

Department of Social Sciences, The Assam Kaziranga University, Assam, India. *Corresponding Author's Email: dipenpatra2012@gmail.com

Abstract

The present study was conducted to examine social intelligence among college students in the Jorhat district of Assam with two major objectives: (a) to study the level of social intelligence among college students in Jorhat district, Assam and (b) to explore the problems and challenges associated with social intelligence among these students. In the first phase of the study, the researchers assessed the level of social intelligence by selecting a sample of 404 college students from 16 general degree colleges of Jorhat district. The results revealed that most college students fell within the average level of social intelligence. In the second phase, out of the total sample, eight students who obtained poor social intelligence scores were selected to conduct in-depth case studies. The findings from the case studies highlighted several problems and challenges among students with low social intelligence, such as difficulty in understanding others' emotions, low emotional sensitivity, poor attentive listening, misinterpretation of social cues, limited self-presentation skills, low confidence in influencing others, avoidance of formal and public social situations and difficulty in providing emotional support during crisis situations. The study underscores the need for targeted institutional support and steps to strengthen their social intelligence, particularly during the critical transition to higher education and contributes context-specific insights from an underrepresented region of India.

Keywords: Assam, College Students, Jorhat, Social Adjustment, Social Intelligence.

Introduction

Human interaction is a fundamental aspect of social life and the ability to understand, interpret and respond effectively to others is essential for personal adjustment, academic success and psychological well-being. This ability, known as social intelligence, involves awareness of social situations, sensitivity to others' emotions and the capacity to manage interpersonal relationships constructively (1). In higher education, where students encounter diverse social, academic and cultural environments, social intelligence is particularly important for healthy adjustment and effective functioning. College life is a critical developmental stage characterized by increased independence, new peer relationships, academic pressure and unfamiliar social contexts. Students are expected to communicate effectively, collaborate in group learning, manage conflicts and develop supportive social networks. Difficulties in interpreting social cues, regulating emotions and engaging confidently in interpersonal situations may result in misunderstanding, social withdrawal, poor academic participation and emotional distress. Thus, understanding social

intelligence among college students is important for promoting academic achievement and psychosocial well-being (2, 3). Social intelligence has gained increasing attention because of rapid socio-cultural changes, digitalization and growing mental health concerns among young adults. In India, it is particularly relevant due to socio-cultural diversity, collective social norms and an academically demanding higher education system. Students may face challenges related to language differences, socio-economic disparities, cultural expectations and adjustment to new institutional environments (4, 5). Although several Indian studies have examined emotional intelligence and related psychological variables, research specifically addressing social intelligence among college students remains limited. Existing research is also predominantly quantitative, providing limited insight into the lived experiences of students with low social intelligence. This gap is particularly evident in North-East India, where cultural and educational contexts may uniquely influence students' social development. Assam, with its diverse ethnic and cultural composition,

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therefore provides an important context for examining students' social interactions and adjustment (6, 7).

Global research indicates that college students may experience difficulties in understanding emotional cues, empathic engagement and interpersonal communication. Increased reliance on digital communication can reduce opportunities for face-to-face interaction and accurate interpretation of social signals (8, 9). Stress, anxiety, depression and low self-esteem may further contribute to social withdrawal, isolation and impaired peer relationships (10, 11), affecting academic participation in collaborative learning environments (12, 13). In India, research suggests relationships among emotional Intelligence, social intelligence, quality of life, stress and academic functioning. Lower emotional Intelligence and poor self-awareness may contribute to ineffective communication, social misunderstandings and academic difficulties (14, 15). Gender differences have also been reported, with female students often demonstrating higher emotional and social intelligence, supporting better social adjustment and academic collaboration (16, 17).

The COVID-19 pandemic further transformed students' social and educational experiences. Online learning reduced face-to-face interaction and exposure to non-verbal social cues. Although digital platforms supported academic continuity, prolonged online interaction and reduced spontaneous peer engagement affected emotional understanding and relationship-building for some students (18, 19). Unequal access to technology, difficulties adapting to online learning, isolation and psychological distress also contributed to academic disengagement and reduced well-being (20, 21). Social intelligence is influenced by several factors, including family environment, peer relationships, institutional support, socio-emotional learning, co-curricular activities, experiential learning, community engagement and mental health support (22). Its relevance extends beyond academic life to employability, entrepreneurship and broader socio-economic development (23). Despite growing research, significant gaps remain in region-specific, mixed-method and post-pandemic studies of social intelligence among college students, particularly in North-East India.

Objectives of the Study

- a) To examine the level of Social Intelligence among college students in Jorhat District, Assam.
- b) To explore the problems and challenges associated with social intelligence among college students in Jorhat District, Assam.

Conceptual Framework of Social Intelligence

There is a conceptualization of social intelligence through two broad dimensions: social awareness and social facility. Social awareness refers to the ability to sense and understand the internal states of others and interpret social situations, including primary empathy, attunement, empathic accuracy and social cognition. Social facility refers to the ability to use social awareness effectively in interpersonal interactions and includes synchrony, self-presentation, influence and concern (24). Thus, social intelligence involves both understanding others and interacting effectively based on that understanding.

In the present study, the framework provides the theoretical foundation, while the Tromso Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS) is used to operationalize social intelligence quantitatively. The TSIS consists of 21 items and assesses three dimensions: social skills, social awareness and social information processing. These frameworks are used complementarily rather than as identical classifications. The quantitative component measures social intelligence through the TSIS, while the qualitative component explores the lived experiences and challenges of students with low social intelligence. The qualitative interview schedule was developed with reference to Goleman's dimensions. Difficulties in understanding emotional expressions, recognizing emotional needs, attentive listening and interpreting social cues were considered under social awareness. Difficulties related to self-presentation, participation in formal and public social situations, influencing others and providing emotional support were considered under social facility.

Accordingly, social intelligence in the present study is understood as a multidimensional interpersonal capacity involving the perception and interpretation of social information, awareness of others' emotional states, effective communication and interaction and appropriate behavioral responses. This conceptualization

establishes a clear link between the quantitative assessment through the TSIS and the qualitative exploration of students' interpersonal experiences and challenges. It also provides a framework for understanding how difficulties in social awareness and social facility may influence students' social adjustment, interpersonal relationships, participation and functioning within the college environment.

Methodology

The study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-method design, combining both

quantitative and qualitative techniques to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the social intelligence of college students. The universe of the study comprises all entry level college students enrolled in general degree colleges in Jorhat district, Assam (approximate GPS coordinates 26.75°N, 94.22°E). There is a total of 16 such colleges in Jorhat district, with 4,035 students enrolled in the academic year 2024–25. The researchers then selected 404 students using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique.

Total Population= 4, 035 (Male population= 1,932 and Female population= 2,103)

Total sample size= 404 (10% from the population)

Male Sample: $1,932/4,035 \times 404 = 194$

Female Sample: $2,103/4,035 \times 404 = 210$

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation of male and female students from the population of 4,035 entry level college students across 16 colleges in the Jorhat district of Assam, as shown in

Table 1. The population comprised 1,932 male and 2,103 female students. Based on the overall proportion, a sample of 404 students was drawn, consisting of 194 male students and 210 female students.

Table 1: List of Population and Sample

Name of the College	Total Students	Male	Female	Male Sample = 194)	Female Sample = 210)	Total Sample
Bahona College	238	108	130	11	13	24
Borholla College	210	143	62	14	6	20
Chandra Kamal Bezbaruah College, Teok	410	201	209	20	21	41
Chandra Kamal Bezbaruah Commerce College	90	42	48	4	5	9
Cinamara College	225	142	83	14	8	22
Devi Charan Baruah Girls' College	339	0	339	0	34	34
Dr. Nabin Bordoloi College	144	92	52	9	5	14
Ghanakanta Borah College, Tamulichiga	140	51	89	5	9	14
Jagannath Barooah College (Autonomous)	575	344	231	35	23	58
Jorhat College	210	122	88	12	9	21
Jorhat Kendriya Mahavidyalay	344	101	243	10	24	34
Kakojan College	278	118	160	12	16	28
Mariani College	260	176	84	18	8	26
Nakachari College	144	50	94	5	9	14
Nanda Nath Saikia College, Titabar	278	137	141	14	14	28
Sarbodaya College	150	100	50	10	5	15
Total	4035	1932	2103	194	210	404

Table 1 presents the distribution of the study population and the proportionately selected sample from the 16 general degree colleges in Jorhat district, Assam. The total population comprised 4,035 entry-level college students, including 1,932 male and 2,103 female students.

Based on proportionate stratified random sampling, 404 students were selected, consisting of 194 male and 210 female students. Thus, the table demonstrates that the sample provides proportional representation of male and female students across the participating colleges.

Participant Selection and Qualitative Case Selection

The study population comprised 4,035 entry level college students enrolled in 16 general degree colleges in Jorhat district, Assam, during the academic year 2024–25. From this population, 404 students were selected using proportionate stratified random sampling. Of these, eight students who obtained poor scores on the Tromso Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS) were purposively selected for in-depth case studies. The qualitative findings were analyzed thematically and interpreted with reference to Goleman's dimensions of social awareness and social facility.

Tools for Data Collection

The researchers used the following research tools for data collection.

a) The Tromso Social Intelligence Test (TSIS):

This scale consists of 21 items on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' and covers 3 dimensions of social intelligence. The internal consistency reliabilities of the scale for the dimension of Social Skills, Social Awareness and Social Information Processing were 0.85, 0.72 and 0.79 respectively. The scale has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88. The scale

has a concurrent validity of 0.51.

b) Interview Schedule: An interview schedule was used to conduct case studies of college students of Jorhat district, Assam to explore their problems and challenges associated with social intelligence.

Results

The results are presented under the following heading:

Objective No. 1: To study the level of Social Intelligence among college students in Jorhat District, Assam

Table 2 shows that the mean score of Social Intelligence among college students in Jorhat district of Assam is 90, with a standard deviation (SD) of 11.30. The skewness value of 0.23 indicates that the distribution of Social Intelligence scores is positively skewed. This suggests that a greater number of students have scores below the mean score of the group. The kurtosis value is 0.13, indicating that the distribution is leptokurtic, with a curve that is slightly more peaked than the normal distribution. This further suggests that the scores of most of the students are concentrated around the mean.

Table 2: Performance Level on Social Intelligence

N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
404	90	11.30	0.23	0.13

Note: N = Total Sample size, SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 3: Distribution of Social Intelligence Levels Among Students

Raw Scores	Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
21-46	Very Poor	Nil	0
47-72	Poor	20	4.95
73-97	Average	286	70.80
98-122	High	96	23.70
123-147	Very High	2	0.55
		Total= 404	

Table 3 presents the distribution of students across the different levels of social intelligence. Most respondents, 286 students (70.80%), were classified as having an average level of social intelligence, while 96 students (23.70%) demonstrated a high level. Only 20 students

(4.95%) were classified in the poor category and no student fell within the very-poor category. The very-high category included only 2 students (0.55%), indicating that extremely high social intelligence was uncommon in the study sample.

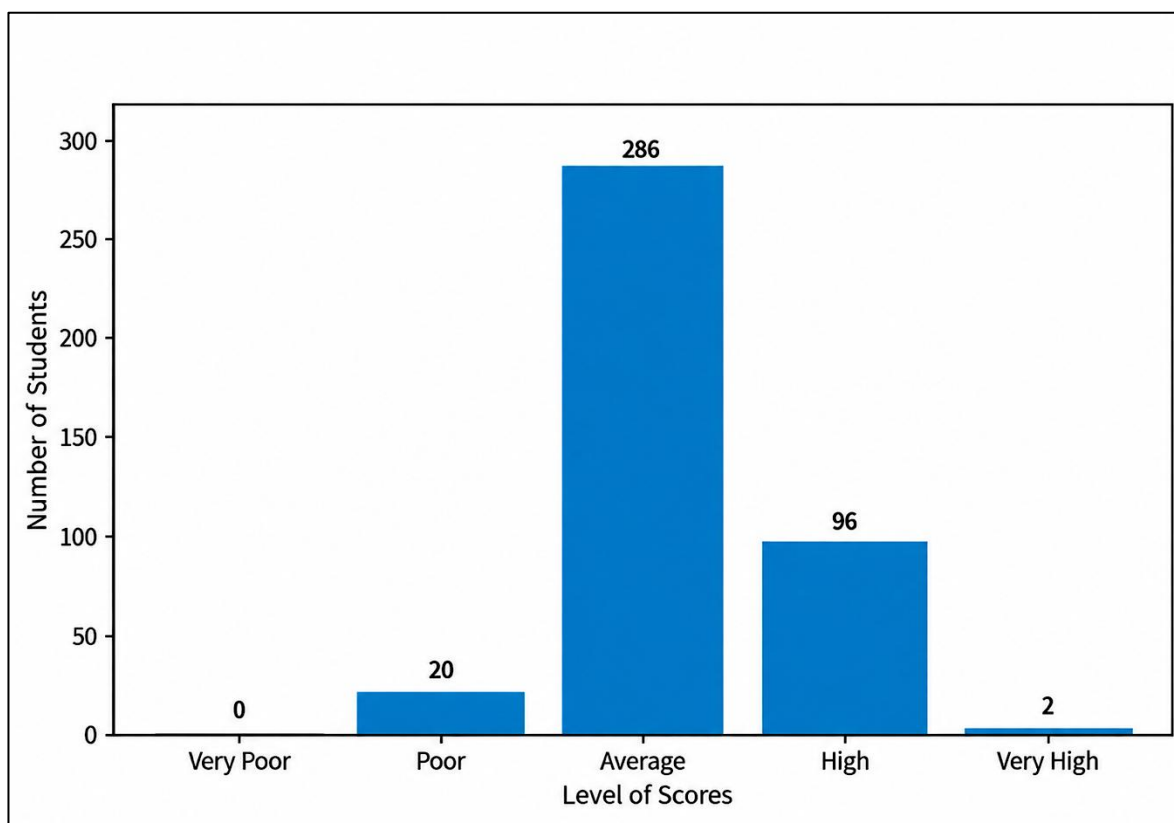


Figure 1: Distribution and Interpretation of Social Intelligence Scores Among College Students (30)

Figure 1 visually illustrates the distribution of social intelligence levels among the college students. The figure shows a substantially higher bar for the average category, representing 286 students, followed by the high category with 96 students. The poor category accounts for only 20 students, while the very-high category includes just 2 students and the very-poor category has no respondents. Thus, Figure 1 provides a clear visual representation of the pattern reported in Table 3 and reinforces the finding that most students possessed an average level of social intelligence.

Table 3 and Figure 1 present the distribution of social intelligence levels among college students. The findings reveal that none of the students fell under the very poor category, while 20 students (4.95%) were classified as having a poor level of social intelligence. Most of the students, 286 (70.80%), belonged to the average category, indicating that most college students in the sample possessed an average level of social intelligence. The high level constituted the second-largest category, comprising 96 students (23.70%). This finding suggests that a considerable proportion of the students demonstrated social intelligence levels above the average. In contrast, only 2 students (0.55%) were found to have a very high

level of social intelligence. Overall, the results indicate that most college students (70.80%) in the sample exhibited an average level of social intelligence.

Objective No. 2: To Explore the Problems and Challenges Associated with Social Intelligence Among College Students

Out of total sample, eight students who obtained poor scores on the 'Tromso Social Intelligence Test' were purposively selected for in-depth case studies to find out and explore their problems and challenges associated with social intelligence. For this purpose, the researchers prepared an interview schedule based on 'Daniel Goleman's conceptual framework of social intelligence (2006)', which includes the dimensions of 'social awareness' and 'social facility'. The researchers changed the names of the respondents and their colleges to maintain confidentiality as well as for better understanding and feelings. The eight cases were named as- Arjun, Priya, Bidyut, Nikita, Robin, Utpal, Aruhi and Rakhi. Name of the colleges are also given as- X, Y and Z.

Problems and Challenges Associated with Social Intelligence of College Students

After careful analysis of all case studies, the researchers identified following major problems and challenges associated with college students regarding social intelligence.

a) Difficulty in Understanding Emotions of Others Expressed Indirectly: Most respondents failed to correctly understand and interpret emotions expressed indirectly by others through silence, changes in voice, reduced interaction and withdrawal. Respondents misinterpreted such emotions as: normal routine behavior, tiredness or a need of personal space. For example: Arjun falsely interpreted his friend's silence as tiredness during group project.

Arjun (name changed) cited that- "Once, one of my close friends stopped talking properly during lunch breaks. He would reply only in short words, but I thought he was just tired or busy. Later, I came to know from another friend that he was upset because he felt ignored by me during group work. Honestly, I didn't notice his facial expressions or body language at that time. I realized it only after the situation became serious." Similarly, Priya misinterpreted her roommate's silence and withdrawal as a need for personal space. Such misinterpretation negatively impacts on relationships. Priya (name changed) reported during interview that- "Once, my roommate stopped talking to me properly and avoided eye contact. I thought she just needed space. Later, she burst out saying she felt lonely and ignored. I honestly didn't notice her sadness earlier because she never said anything directly."

b) Low Emotional Sensitivity Towards Close Relationships: Most respondents often failed to notice emotional needs and distress of their close ones. For example: Utpal failed to recognize his father's emotional distress when he ignored his father's repeated phone calls. He assumed his father's silence as office related stress. Similarly, Bidyut misunderstood his sister's silence as failure as rudeness and shouted at her. Such lack of emotional sensitivity led to guilt among respondents. Bidyut (name changed) reported that- "One incident that affected me deeply was with my

younger sister. One evening she was unusually silent and kept herself busy with her phone. I assumed she was just irritated or bored. I even scolded her for not responding properly. Later that night, my mother told me that my sister was upset because she had failed in a class test and felt scared to tell anyone. I felt very guilty because instead of understanding her emotions, I reacted impatiently."

c) Poor Attentive Listening: Respondents reported difficulty in paying and maintaining attention during conversations with friends, teachers and family members due to their preoccupied thoughts related to personal and academic issues. As a result, they often failed to respond appropriately and others perceived them as uninterested persons. For example: Rakhi, being preoccupied with her own thoughts failed to respond when her teacher called her multiple times in class. Such poor attention led to emotional distance among people. Similarly, Nikita failed to pay attention when her friend shared relationship problem. Nikita (name changed) reported that- "Even when someone is speaking to me, I start thinking about exams, family issues, or what I should say next. Once, a friend was sharing her personal problems after class, but I couldn't concentrate properly. Later, she told me she felt that I was not really listening."

d) Limited Verbal and Non-verbal Responses: Poor social intelligence led to minimal eye contact, delayed response, soft voice and limited facial expressions during any interactions. As a result, it created an impression of disinterest, reduced the quality of interactions and negatively affected relationship building. For example: friends consider Aruhi as uninterested in group works due to her soft voice and limited reactions. Similarly, Arjun's friend feels ignored due to limited verbal reactions of Arjun during conversation of foreign visit experience. He (name changed) reported that- "One of my friends once told me that I always seem uninterested when he talks. But in my mind, I thought I was listening. I usually don't respond much or show expressions, so people feel I'm not paying attention."

e) Misunderstanding: Most respondents misunderstood others' behavior by

interpreting it as shyness, stress, arrogance, or disinterest. For example: Robin misjudges a peer's frustrated tone as personal attack to him during preparation of departmental wall magazine. Such misunderstandings led to conflict, withdrawal, or breakdown of relationships. Similarly, Priya misunderstood her friend's sharp tone as anger in laboratory class. She (name changed) told that- "During a lab group activity, one classmate spoke very sharply. I thought she was angry with me, so I avoided her. Later, I realized she was just stressed due to time pressure. My wrong interpretation created unnecessary distance between us."

- f) Low Empathic Accuracy:** Most respondents showed low empathic accuracy, meaning an inability to understand others' emotional state accurately. Such inaccuracy led to inaccurate reaction or actions. For example: Rakhi avoided a peer throughout the preparation of a group project because she misjudged the peers silence as disinterest. Similarly, Bidyut excluded a peer from his assignment group due to misjudged his quietness as arrogance. He (name changed) reported that- "during a group assignment in our first semester, one of our group members rarely spoke and avoided eye contact. I assumed he was arrogant or not interested. So, I excluded him from the group. Later, the teacher pointed out that he was very shy and felt uncomfortable speaking in groups. I felt embarrassed and guilty because my wrong interpretation hurt him and affected group work."

- g) Confusion Regarding Expected Social Behavior:** Respondents also showed uncertainty about expected behavior or appropriate behavior in new social settings. For example: Nikita hesitated to approach a dance teacher for admission and remained seated in a corner throughout the class. Similarly, Aruhi decided not to ask any question during first college seminar even after having doubt because she was uncertain about the behavior expected by students. Such confusion often led to hesitation, silence and avoid participation in new environments. She (name changed) reported an incident- "during my first college seminar, I noticed that some students were asking questions while others were silent. I

didn't know what was expected from us. I had doubts about the topic, but I stayed silent because I was afraid of asking something inappropriate and being judged by others."

- h) Low Confidence in Self-presentation:** All respondents showed low confidence when presenting themselves in seminars, group discussions, or any other formal events. They experienced extreme nervousness, trembling voices, difficulty remembering important points and avoidance of eye contact during presentations. For example: Priya experienced such situations during her seminar presentation, Utpal also experienced such situations during self-introduction in the first seminar. He (name changed) reported an incident happened in seminar presentation- "during a class seminar presentation, I forgot points even though I had prepared well. My voice shook and I avoided eye contact. After that, I lost confidence and preferred written work over speaking."

- i) Avoidance of Public and Formal Social Events:** Due to low confidence in self-presentation, respondents often tried to avoid such gatherings. They intentionally avoided seminars, stage performance and other public speaking events. For example: Aruhi was absent on the day of her seminar and later submitted a false medical document because she feared presenting herself publicly. Similarly, Arjun and Robin also avoided group presentations because of repeated negative experiences. Such avoidance negatively affected both academic and personal growth. Robin (name changed) reported that - "During a presentation, I forgot many points and my voice shook. I felt very embarrassed. After that, I started avoiding presentations and speaking in front of others."

- j) Difficulty in Influencing Ideas:** Respondents reported that their ideas regarding various matters were often rejected, neglected, or ridiculed by others. They faced difficulty influencing others through their opinions and ideas. For example: Priya stopped giving ideas after costume proposal for college dance performance was neglected and laughed by peers. She (name changed) reported that - "most of the time, I feel others ignore my ideas. Once, I suggested a modern dress code for

performing a dance in college event, but my friends ignored the idea and found it foolish. I felt disappointed and did not try again.” Robin also stopped offering ideas after several rejections of his ideas regarding theme of departmental wall magazine, theme of cultural rally, dress code for events etc. by friends and teachers.”

k) Difficulty in Providing Emotional Support and Emotional Avoidance During Crisis:

Respondents also had trouble showing or providing emotional support during difficult times even after feeling genuine emotional concern. They often stayed silent and may avoid emotionally intense situations due to the fear of saying something inappropriate. For example: Arjun avoided calling his close friend after the death of his grandfather due to uncertainty about what to say, Bidyut avoided meeting a friend whose father died, Priya avoided contacting her best friend who failed in the examination. She (name changed) reported that- “I feel concerned but don’t know what to say. I usually listen quietly but avoid giving advice or comfort because I’m afraid of saying something wrong. My best friend once cried after failing exam in first semester. I wanted to support her, but I just stayed silent. Later, I felt guilty for not being more emotionally supportive.” Similarly, Rakhi also avoided a close friend who was forced to marriage. Such avoidance led to feelings of guilt among the participants and caused short- to long-term damage to close relationships.

The findings from the case studies clearly indicate that low social intelligence among college students results in multifaceted and interrelated social difficulties. These challenges affect emotional awareness, communication, confidence, interpersonal relationships and overall social adjustment. The persistence of these problems highlights the urgent need for institutional support mechanisms, including guidance and counselling services, emotional literacy training and structured social skills development programs in colleges.

Discussion

The present study found that most college students (70.80%) demonstrated an average level of social intelligence, while 23.70% showed a high level and only 4.95% fell in the poor category. This suggests

that most students possessed basic social competencies, although there remains scope for developing more advanced interpersonal abilities. Similar research has emphasized that social intelligence among university students is associated with communication, interpersonal functioning and adaptive social behavior (25, 26). Recent evidence also suggests that social and emotional competencies are relevant to students' academic achievement and psychological well-being (27).

The qualitative findings provide further explanation for the quantitative results. Students with poor social intelligence reported difficulties in understanding others' emotions, attentive listening, interpreting social cues, empathic accuracy, self-presentation and providing emotional support. These findings are consistent with recent studies showing that emotional and interpersonal competencies contribute to effective social interaction among university students (28, 29). Recent research has also identified social awareness as an important factor in students' psychological well-being and adaptive social behavior (30). Thus, the present findings indicate that social intelligence involves not only interacting with others but also accurately understanding emotions, social situations and appropriate behavioral responses.

The difficulties related to low confidence, avoidance of presentations and formal social situations and withdrawal from emotionally demanding interactions are also important. Such behaviors may reduce students' opportunities to participate in academic and social activities and to develop interpersonal confidence. Previous research has linked social and emotional competencies with academic performance, motivation, interpersonal competence and well-being among university students (31, 32). In addition, research on college students suggests that stronger social intelligence and social awareness may help reduce negative social experiences associated with digital and interpersonal pressures (33).

Overall, the quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that social intelligence among college students should be viewed as a multidimensional and developmental capacity. Although most students demonstrated an average level, the case studies identified specific areas requiring

improvement, particularly emotional understanding, empathy, listening, social awareness, communication, self-presentation and emotional support. Recent intervention research further suggests that structured programmes targeting emotional and social intelligence can be incorporated into university settings (34). Therefore, colleges should provide opportunities for collaborative learning, peer interaction, counselling, experiential activities and social-emotional skill development to strengthen students' interpersonal functioning.

Conclusion

The present study examined the level of social intelligence of college students in the Jorhat district, Assam and explored the problems and challenges associated with low social intelligence through a mixed-method approach. The quantitative result showed that most college students (70.80%) fell within the average or moderate level of social intelligence. This distribution indicates that although most students possess basic social competencies, advanced social intelligence skills required for effective interpersonal functioning and social adjustment remain underdeveloped among a significant section of students.

The qualitative case studies provided deeper insights into the lived experiences of students with low social intelligence. The narratives highlighted multifaceted challenges, including difficulty in understanding others' emotions, poor emotional sensitivity, ineffective listening, misinterpretation of social cues, low confidence in self-presentation, avoidance of social and formal situations and difficulty in providing emotional support during crises. These challenges were found to be interrelated and collectively contributed to poor social adjustment, emotional distress and social isolation during the crucial initial phase of college life. The persistence of social intelligence difficulties among college students suggests that academic institutions alone cannot assume that students naturally acquire these skills during their transition to higher education. Without systematic support, students with low social intelligence remain vulnerable to interpersonal conflicts, reduced academic participation and compromised psychological well-being. Overall, the study concludes that strengthening social intelligence

among college students is essential for fostering healthy interpersonal relationships, emotional resilience and effective social adjustment. The integration of structured social intelligence development initiatives within higher education institutions is imperative, particularly for entry level students navigating new academic and social environments. By combining quantitative assessment with qualitative exploration, the study contributes context-specific and practical insights that are especially relevant for underrepresented regions such as North-East India and provides a foundation for informed institutional interventions and future research.

Practical Implementation of the Result

The predominance of average social intelligence levels among college students indicates the need to complement academic instruction with systematic efforts to strengthen social and interpersonal competencies. Colleges may consider incorporating social intelligence-focused activities, such as collaborative learning, group interaction and experiential exercises, within both curricular and co-curricular frameworks. The difficulties experienced by students with low social intelligence underline the importance of early identification and preventive support through orientation programs that address emotional awareness, communication skills and confidence building. The study also highlights the crucial role of guidance and counselling services in helping students manage emotional challenges, social anxiety and adjustment-related issues during the transition to college life. In addition, teachers can contribute by fostering inclusive and supportive classroom environments that encourage participation, peer interaction and empathetic communication. At a broader level, the study emphasizes the need for higher education policies to integrate social intelligence and socio-emotional learning components, particularly in underrepresented regions such as North-East India, to promote students' social adjustment, psychological well-being and overall academic development.

Originality and Contribution of the Study

The originality of the present study lies in its context-specific and mixed-method examination of social intelligence among entry-level college students in Jorhat district, Assam. While previous

studies have examined social intelligence and related constructs among students, limited empirical attention has been given to college students in North-East India, particularly in the context of Assam. Moreover, existing research has predominantly focused on quantitative assessment, providing limited insight into the lived experiences of students with low social intelligence. The present study addresses these gaps by first assessing the level of social intelligence among 404 college students and subsequently conducting in-depth case studies of eight students who obtained poor scores on the Tromso Social Intelligence Scale. By integrating quantitative assessment with qualitative exploration, the study contributes to existing knowledge by identifying specific interpersonal, emotional and social challenges associated with low social intelligence. The findings provide context-specific evidence that can inform institutional support, counselling and social-emotional skill development initiatives for college students, particularly in underrepresented higher education contexts such as North-East India.

Limitation of the Study

The study is delimited to entry level college students of the academic year 2024-25, enrolled in regular degree colleges offering courses such as: B.A., B.Com. and B.Sc. and is confined to colleges located in the Jorhat district of Assam. Vocational and technical colleges are excluded from the study.

Abbreviations

N = Total sample size, SD = Standard Deviation, TSIS= Tromso Social Intelligence Scale.

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Author Contributions

Dipen Patra: Material Preparation, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Manuscript Preparation, Subsequent Revisions, Madhu Monjuri Gohain: Conceptualization, Study Design, Supervision, Validation. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding authors, upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assistance

The authors acknowledge the use of generative AI to assist in the paraphrasing of certain parts of the manuscript. All content generated through AI was critically reviewed, edited and verified by the authors to ensure accuracy, originality and compliance with academic standards. The authors take full responsibility for the integrity and validity of the manuscript.

Ethics Approval

The research proposal was reviewed and approved by the University Doctoral Research Committee (UDRC) of The Assam Kaziranga University. The reference number of ethical approval is KU Registrar/Acad/PhD_Reg/2025/026.

This clearance affirmed that the study complied with ethical standards prescribed for research involving human subjects.

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