

SOCIAL SKILLS IN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS WITH DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES OF PREPARATION FOR WORK¹

HABILIDADES SOCIAIS EM UNIVERSITÁRIOS COM DIFERENTES EXPERIÊNCIAS DE PREPARAÇÃO PARA O TRABALHO

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ABSTRACT: This study aimed to: a) compare the repertoire of social skills of students from the Teaching Undergraduate Program in Special Education at the Federal University of São Carlos, who participated in the compulsory curricular internship and/or the Teaching Initiation Scholarship Institutional Program (known as PIBID) with students who did not have such experiences; b) compare the repertoire of social skills of students who worked with those who have never worked; c) correlate the repertoire of social skills and sociodemographic variables. The research took place in the University, with the participation of 75 students, aged between 18 and 50 years, with 66 being of the feminine gender and nine of the masculine. The students answered individually or in groups to the initial questionnaire, socioeconomic questionnaire and Social Skill Inventory. Three statistical tests were used, the *t-Test* to compare the social skills of the participants who had already worked with the students who never worked; *ANOVA* to compare the social skills among the groups; and the *Pearson* correlation to verify correlations among the sociodemographic variables and social skills. The study points out better results among the students who participated in the internship with a statistically significant difference for the 'Self-exposure to strangers and new situations' factor and a better evaluation of the 'Self-control of aggressiveness' factor among those who worked. Thus, it is inferred that practical internship and PIBID experiences have the potential to assist students in improving their repertoire of social skills. However, these contributions could be more robust if such skills were intentionally worked out in specific disciplines.

KEYWORDS: Special Education. Social Skills. Teacher Education.

RESUMO: Este estudo teve como objetivos: a) comparar o repertório de habilidades sociais de alunos da Licenciatura em Educação Especial da Universidade Federal de São Carlos que participaram de estágio curricular obrigatório e/ou do Programa Institucional de Bolsas de Iniciação à Docência (PIBID) com o de alunos que não vivenciaram tais experiências; b) comparar o repertório de habilidades sociais dos alunos que trabalharam com o dos que nunca trabalharam; c) correlacionar o repertório de habilidades sociais e variáveis sociodemográficas. A pesquisa ocorreu na universidade, contou com a participação de 75 alunos, com faixa etária entre 18 e 50 anos, sendo 66 do gênero feminino e nove do masculino. Os alunos responderam individualmente ou em grupo ao questionário inicial, questionário socioeconômico e Inventário de Habilidades Sociais. Foram utilizados três testes estatísticos, sendo o *Teste t* para comparar as habilidades sociais dos participantes que já trabalharam com o dos alunos que nunca trabalharam; o *ANOVA* para comparar as habilidades sociais entre os grupos; e a correlação de *Pearson* para verificar correlações entre as variáveis sociodemográficas e habilidades sociais. O estudo aponta melhores resultados entre os alunos que participaram de estágio com diferença estatisticamente significativa para o fator "Auto exposição a desconhecidos e situações novas" e melhor avaliação no fator "Autocontrole da agressividade" entre os que trabalharam. Assim, infere-se que as experiências práticas de estágio e PIBID têm potencial para auxiliar os alunos no aprimoramento de seu repertório de habilidades sociais. Contudo, essas contribuições poderiam ser mais robustas se tais habilidades fossem trabalhadas intencionalmente em disciplinas específicas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação Especial. Habilidades Sociais. Formação de professores.

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1 INTRODUCTION

At this present time, the education of professionals for the labor market should be focusing on a range of skills and abilities beyond that of the technical content of a particular profession. Matos (2009) emphasizes that universities must offer conditions so that the student, in addition to having a deep knowledge of the content of the profession, meets the expectations and behavioral requirements of the chosen profession.

In relation to this demand, in the case of Teaching undergraduate students in Special Education, who will be specialized teachers that will work with the Target Population of Special Education (TPSE)⁵, there will be a need to perform job positions related to the development of social skills in their students. These skills could be developed by teachers in students with intellectual disabilities and autism, for example, since there is usually mention of deficits or problems in the social interactions of these people (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2014). Thus, a good repertoire of social skills in these teachers is considered important, and also that they know how to use them competently in their social interactions in order to directly and indirectly develop these skills in their students.

One of the ways to develop or improve the repertoire of social skills can be in specific training programs that can be performed in groups that use the experiential method (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2003; Villas Boas, Silveira, & Bolsoni-Silva, 2005; Lima & Soares, 2015). Another way may be the development of situations of everyday social interaction as the person is exposed to conditions of interaction that demand certain social skills (Del Prette, Ferreira, Dias, & Del Prette, 2015). Thinking about this, since the Teaching undergraduate students in Special Education participate in at least two activities of teacher education throughout the course - the curricular internship and the participation in the Teaching Initiation Scholarship Institutional Program (known as PIBID), the question that arises is whether these activities could contribute to the improvement of social skills in this specific public. In this sense, thinking about the social skills of the Teaching undergraduate students of Special Education becomes of extreme importance, as, according to Del Prette and Del Prette (2011a), when the person presents a good repertoire of these skills, he/she has better, more productive and lasting personal and professional relationships, and better physical and mental health.

Yet, according to Del Prette and Del Prette (2011b, p. 20), '[...] social skills are classes of social behaviors that can only be classified as such insofar as they contribute to social competence'. Such skills are learned and reflect on personal, situational and cultural dimensions (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2011b). Social competence is an '[...] evaluation attribute of behavior or episode of successful behaviors in the social environment' (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2011b, p. 20).

The authors emphasize that social competence is considered under two great dimensions of functionality, instrumental and ethical-moral (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2011b). The instrumental dimension refers to criteria that lead to instantaneous and subjective consequences, obtaining positive emotional sensations, such as satisfaction and self-valorization with the obtained results.

⁵ The Target Population of Special Education (TPSE), according to the National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education (2008), are those students who have a disability (intellectual disability, hearing impairment, physical disability, visual impairment, multiple disabilities), global developmental disorders and high skills/giftedness.

The ethical-moral dimension refers to the positive medium to long-term implications of respect for interpersonal human rights, which include, in addition to the individual, the other, or even a group (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2011b). These two dimensions must be related so that a person behaves in a socially skillful way. Thus, thinking that learning social skills

[...] and the improvement of social competence occur naturally throughout life, through social interactions with different interlocutors and based on different processes, such as instruction, consequences and modeling. Social demands and learning processes tend to be differentiated during the stages of development (Del Prette et al., 2015, pp. 319-320).

One of the stages of learning that may comprise the youth and early adult life is the university context. Soares and Del Prette (2015) emphasize that the situations and the demands of the university are opportunities to learn these skills not only to be used during the course, but also for the professional future. Thus, it is extremely relevant to investigate the influence of this context for the promotion and improvement of the social skills of future Special Education teachers.

In an analysis of empirical studies, Soares and Del Prette (2015) verified the relationship between social skills and academic adaptation to university. The authors concluded that if the person has a good repertoire of social skills, this can contribute to their living, academic performance and facilitate their process of adaptation to university.

Angst's study (2013, p. 7) aimed at

[...] identifying relationships between social skills, resilience, sociodemographic variables (age, marital status, etc.) and professional background (working hours, if he/she has worked as a teacher, if he/she likes to be a teacher, among others) of final-year students at a public university in the state of Paraná.

Eighty-six final-year students took part in the study, 4 of them of the Visual Arts course, 14 of Social Sciences, 8 of Physics, 10 of Chemistry, 2 of Music, 16 of Biological Sciences and 32 of Pedagogy. The instruments used for data collection were: Pesce Resilience Scale; Resilient Behavior Questionnaire; Social Skill Inventory; and a Sociodemographic Questionnaire (with general questions related to professional background).

The results indicated that the majority of the participants who were female, were already working as teachers and liked it, so when they thought about quitting they did not. Participants presented an adequate repertoire of social skills and it was found that those with high scores on social skills had higher resilience scores, a greater tendency to enjoy the profession and dedicated a greater number of hours to work. The author concluded that it is satisfactory to know that final-year university students, future teachers, have a good repertoire of social skills, and she stresses the importance of new research in the area, to assist in the education of these teachers (Angst, 2013).

Maia, Soares and Victoria's study (2009, p. 46) aimed at '[...] comparing the social skills of Elementary School teachers and Early Childhood Education and also to verify the correlations between social skills and intelligence'. Twenty-four teachers from Elementary School and 24 from Early Childhood Education participated in the study. The participants

responded to the Social Skill Inventory (known as IHS-Del Prette) and the Progressive Matrix Test-Raven. The data were analyzed statistically and showed that the teachers of the Early Childhood Education have higher scores of social skills than those of the Elementary School. There was no statistically significant correlation between intelligence and social skills in the sample surveyed. The authors concluded the work emphasizing the importance of the school to work not only on the intellectual abilities, but also the social skills, since these are being more and more demanded, in the professional environment as well as in daily personal relationships.

In international literature, Ahmetoglu and Acar (2016) evaluated the personal and educational characteristics of the teacher in initial education, associating them with social skills, empathy and communication skills. The study included 385 teachers in initial education who attended a state university and whose ages ranged from 18 to 32. As instruments of data collection, a Social Skill Inventory was used, which measured social competence; an empathic trend scale; and a communication skill evaluation scale. Correlations between these measurements and the t-Test were performed. The study showed better results in empathy and communication skills in women. The data also showed that teachers with lower socioeconomic status reported higher social communication skills. The findings of this study showed that the social competence, empathy and communication skills of teachers in initial education differed between gender, socioeconomic status, as well as in relation to being a member of a social club and the number of friends.

Palomera, Briones, Gómez-Linares and Vera (2017) evaluated a training program whose focus was social and emotional learning implemented in a curriculum of teachers in initial education. The proposal of the study was to verify the effects of intervention on the emotional abilities (self-esteem, empathy, affection) and social communication skills of the intervention participants (n=192) compared to the control group (n=58). The research was almost experimental, with pre and post-test measures, with 250 students with an average age of 20.8 (SD=3.22).

Different instruments of data collection were applied, namely: self-esteem scale; empathy scale; scale of positive and negative emotions; assertiveness scale; anxiety and social trust scale; and personality scale. The main results highlighted are the increase in self-esteem and confidence of the participants, improvement with the concern about assertiveness, and also the reduction of fear in public speech and in the frequency of negative emotions. The program, according to the authors, was still able to modify the empathy repertoire of the students, indicating better levels of self-regulation. The authors concluded from this study that the intervention was effective in modifying social and emotional repertoires in initial teacher education and the need for further studies on the theme, especially those involving specialized teachers in the realm of Special Education.

In the present work, it is argued, therefore, that a good repertoire of social skills is of extreme importance and may assist the special educator in interpersonal relations with other teachers, employees, direction, coordination and supervision of the school, besides assisting him/her in the development of their work with the students. As Rosin-Pinola and Del Prette (2014) point out, this repertoire will be important in the planning and implementation of their pedagogical practices and in the teaching of socially accepted and desirable behaviors

to their TPSE students, and also in the accomplishment of the co-teaching and collaborative consulting, a strongly defended and studied strand in the Teaching Degree in Special Education of the *Universidade Federal de São Carlos* (Federal University of São Carlos) [UFSCar].

Thus, the present study objectives are: a) to compare the repertoire of social skills of students of Teaching Degree in Special Education of UFSCar who participated in the compulsory curricular internship and/or the Teaching Initiation Scholarship Institutional Program (PIBID) with the students who did not have such experiences; b) to compare the repertoire of social skills of students who worked with those who had never worked; and c) to correlate the repertoire of social skills and sociodemographic variables.

2 METHOD

This study can be characterized as ex-post-facto and correlational. The ex-post-facto research refers to that realized through the fact that has already occurred, that is, the researcher has no control over the independent variable (Gil, 2002). According to Cozby (2003), correlational research is the one that verifies the existence of a positive or negative relationship between the variables investigated.

2.1 ETHICAL ASPECTS

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Federal University of São Carlos (CAEE 58258916.1.0000.5504) and complied with all the procedures established in Resolution No. 466/12 of the National Health Council.

2.2 TEACHING DEGREE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

In Brazil, the Teaching Degree in Special Education (known as LEESp) is currently offered at two public universities, at the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM) and at the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) and also at some private universities. Considering that the participants of this study were students of the Teaching Degree in Special Education of UFSCar who did or did not do the supervised curricular internship and/or participated in PIBID, it is considered relevant to present some aspects about the course.

The LEESp-UFSCar course was created in 2008 (Resolution ConsUni No. 588, of August 19, 2008), with the objective of

[...] graduate teachers with technical, political and ethical skills to teach students with special educational needs; reiterating the principles contained in current education policies; also reiterating the principles defended by UFSCar, which are included in the Institutional Development Plan (IDP) (Universidade Federal de São Carlos [UFSCar], 2012, p. 1).

The course has a workload of 3315 hours, totaling four years of full-time education, and has a curricular matrix that provides disciplines divided into four axes, namely: Theoretical framework, Education for research, Theoretical-practical education and Practical education. This is in order to guarantee that those who graduate are able to perform an educational service to the students of the TPSE with quality (UFSCar, 2012). In addition, since this is a Teaching

Degree context, Resolution No. 2 of July 1, 2015, defines the National Curricular Guidelines for initial education at Higher Education level and for continuing education is the parameter. Some guiding principles of common base for these education courses are labeled, among them: a) solid theoretical and interdisciplinary education; b) theory-practice unit; c) collective and interdisciplinary work; d) social commitment and valorization of the education professional (Resolução CNE/CP N° 2, 2015).

During the course, students have the opportunity to know, to learn and to work together with teachers who work with TPSE students in regular schools at all levels and in specialized institutions through supervised curriculum internship and PIBID. The LEEsp course, as highlighted in its Pedagogical Master Plan, has a curricular matrix that provides four semesters of compulsory internships that add up to 405 hours in the field (UFSCAR, 2012). In addition to the internships, students can also participate in programs aimed at scientific initiation or teaching. PIBID aims to '[...] initiate the teaching of UFSCar's undergraduate students and the continuing education of teachers in service in Public Schools' (UFSCAR, 2012, p. 46). This program seeks to favor the partnership between schools and university, inserting the students of teaching degree, in this case, Special Education, in the activities of the teacher of the educational network, to participate and help from planning to practice within the classroom environment (UFSCar, 2012).

Thus, it is verified that the curricular matrix attempts to privilege the teaching of certain contents aimed at the practical and theoretical instrumentalization of the future special educator. However, the task of the special educator involves other content that relate to the capacities of professional social interaction with family members, classroom teachers and health professionals, as well as with his/her own students. In this way, it becomes important to think about the interpersonal skills that will permeate all of his/her professional performance.

2.3 PARTICIPANTS

The criteria for selecting the participants were: to be properly enrolled and attending one of the four ongoing classes of the LEEsp course at UFSCar, in the year 2016, and whether or not they participated in the internship or PIBID.

Seventy-five students participated in the research. In Table 1, the quantitative description of them can be observed in relation to age group, gender, compulsory internship, participation in PIBID, work (previous and current), other degrees and socioeconomic status. The characteristics were divided by year of admission to the teaching degree course.

Year of admission / variable	2016/1st year	2015/2nd year	2014/3rd year	2013/4th year	TOTAL	
Total number of participants	26	15	13	21	75	
Age range	18-32 years old	19-49 years old	20-26 years old	21-50 years old	18-50 years old	
Gender	Female	23	12	10	21	66
	Male	3	3	3	0	9
	Other	0	0	0	0	0
Compulsory internship	0	0	12	21	33	
PIBID	0	3	5	14	22	
Has worked	12	9	10	17	48	
Currently working	3	2	1	1	7	

Table 1. Characterization of participants

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The majority of participants in the study were first and fourth-year students. It should be noted that more than half of the students in each class, who were enrolled and attending the course at the time, participated in the research. The participants' age ranged from 18 to 50. Of these, 66 were female and nine were male. Of the participating students, three of them were out of profile, for personal reasons and/or for sabbatical leave or failure in a discipline. In addition, six of them have already taken another undergraduate course. Most of them have already worked and only seven currently work as freelancers.

2.4 LOCAL

The study was carried out in a room at the Functional Curriculum laboratory and in theoretical classrooms, on the premises of the Federal University of São Carlos - UFSCar.

2.5 INSTRUMENTS

Three instruments were used, being an initial questionnaire; a socioeconomic questionnaire (Associação Brasileira de Empresas de Pesquisa [ABEP], 2014); and the Social Skill Inventory (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2011a), which will be detailed below.

Initial Questionnaire: an instrument of self-authorship that aimed to raise the main characteristics of the participants in relation to age, education, work experiences and their trajectory in the Teaching Degree in Special Education course, the compulsory internship and participation as a PIBID scholarship holder.

Socioeconomic Questionnaire - Brazilian Criteria (ABEP, 2014): aimed to assess the socioeconomic status of the participants. This instrument consisted of: 12 items of comfort (e.g. number of refrigerators, cars, microwave, DVD, etc.), which were answered from 0 to 4 or more; an item about where the water to the house comes from (general distribution network,

well or spring, other means); an item about the street where the house is located (paved or unpaved/gravel); and an item regarding the level of instruction of the head of household.

Social Skill Inventory (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2011a): it is a validated and self-applied instrument, which aims to characterize social performance/ability in different situations (work, school, family, daily life). The instrument is composed of an application booklet and a response sheet. In the application booklet, there are application instructions and 38 items, which describe a situation of social interaction and a possible reaction to it. The answer sheet consists of the participant identification header and a table with the question number and space to tick the selected response. The answers available for each question follow a Likert scale type and are related to the frequency that the participant presents to the suggested reaction, considering a total of 10 times that the situation of the question could be found. The possible answers are: A - never or rarely; B - rarely; C - regularly; D - very often; and E - always or almost always. The 38 items, for evaluation, are divided into five factors, namely: F1 - Confrontation and self-assertion with risk; F2 - Self-affirmation in the expression of positive feeling; F3 - Conversation and social easiness; F4 - Self-exposure to strangers and new situations; and F5 - Self-control of aggressiveness. However, of the 38 items, seven did not fall into any factor.

2.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

After compliance with the ethical aspects, contact was made with the coordinator of the Teaching Degree in Special Education course at UFSCar when the number of students enrolled and attending the four classes in progress was surveyed. The first author received a list of students' names and e-mails. Subsequently, a standard e-mail was sent to all students, explaining the research, presenting its objectives, procedures, risks and benefits, suggesting possible dates for data collection and the contact for any questions and/or scheduling of the data collection. Students were also contacted via the Special Education Teaching Degree group on Facebook (social network), and personally when the students were in class with prior authorization from the professor.

The applications lasted around 20 to 40 minutes and were performed both individually and in groups. Before the data collection, the participants signed the Consent Form and then the researcher explained each of the instruments (socioeconomic questionnaire, initial questionnaire and Social Skill Inventory). Participants answered the questionnaires individually. Only one participant, because of indigenous culture, needed help in understanding the instruments, especially some of the Social Skill Inventory items for which the researcher provided examples, seeking a relation with his daily life. His application occurred individually and lasted for 130 minutes.

2.7 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The data collected were quantitatively analyzed through statistical analysis. The Social Skill Inventory was analyzed according to the instructions given in the Application, Assessment and Interpretation Manual (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2011a). The overall score (sum of the responses of the 38 items), the five factor scores and the values of each item were calculated individually.

Analysis of the Socioeconomic Questionnaire (ABEP, 2014) was made as indicated in its manual, adding the points related to the answers provided and classifying the participants according to the socioeconomic classes: A, B1, B2, C1, C2 and D-E. These data were used in the description of the participants in the correlation analysis between social skills and sociodemographic variables. The initial questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively and had the function of identifying and separating students into groups.

Three statistical tests were used for analysis: the *t-Test* to compare the repertoire of social skills of the participants who had already worked with the students who had never worked; the ANOVA, to compare the social skills among the groups of students, which were constituted in: 1- did internship and took part in PIBID; 2- did internship and did not take part in PIBID; 3 - did not do internship and took part in PIBID; 4 - neither did internship nor took part in PIBID - both tests were run in SPSS for Windows software; Pearson's correlation of *r* to verify the correlation between sociodemographic variables (age and socioeconomic status) and social skills.

3 RESULTS

We chose to present the results of the tests in tables and/or only through description. In the tables, the results are presented in relation to the general score and to each factor of the Social Skill Inventor (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2011a).

In Table 2, it is possible to observe the median values in the characterization of the social skill (SS) repertoire of the collected sample.

	Median value (n=75)	Classification
General score	96	Good SS Repertoire (above the median)
Factor 1 - Confrontation and Self-assertion with risk	8.64	Good SS Repertoire (above the median)
Factor 2 - Self-affirmation in the expression of positive feeling	9.06	Good SS Repertoire (below the median)
Factor 3 - Conversation and social easiness	7.99	Good SS Repertoire (above the median)
Factor 4 – Self-exposure to strangers and new situations	3.96	Good SS Repertoire (above the median)
Factor 5 – Self-control of aggressiveness	1.21	Good SS Repertoire (above the median)

Table 2. Characterization of the social skills repertoire

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Legend: Classification according to Del Prette and Del Prette (2011a).

It is noted that the participants generally presented a good repertoire of social skills, classified as 'Good repertoire of social skills above the median' in the general score of factors 1, 3, 4 and 5; and 'Good repertoire of social skills below the median' only in factor 2. This result shows that most students self-rated positively in relation to their own social skills.

In Table 3, we can observe the results of the comparison of social skills between the groups of pupils who did internship and took part in PIBID, only one of these modalities or none of these experiences.

		N	Median	SD
General score	did internship; took part in PIBID	19	99.10	15.40
	did internship; did not take part in PIBID	14	104.28	20.31
	did not do internship; took part in PIBID	3	100,66	13.57
	did not do internship; did not take part in PIBID	39	92.58	15.57
	Total	75	96.74	16.78
Factor 1 – Confrontation and self-assertion with risk	did internship; took part in PIBID	19	9.29	2.66031
	did internship; did not take part in PIBID	14	9.92	3.86
	did not do internship; took part in PIBID	3	9.50	2.95
	did not do internship; did not take part in PIBID	39	7.88	2.80
	Total	75	8.68	3.05
Factor 2 – Self-affirmation in the expression of positive feeling	did internship; took part in PIBID	19	9.23	1.65
	did internship; did not take part in PIBID	14	8.92	2.17
	did not do internship; took part in PIBID	3	8.50	0.96
	did not do internship; did not take part in PIBID	39	8.77	1.64
	Total	75	8.90	1.72
Factor 3 – Conversation and social easiness	did internship; took part in PIBID	19	7.64	1.69
	did internship; did not take part in PIBID	14	8.54	1.49
	did not do internship; took part in PIBID	3	8.60	0.85
	did not do internship; did not take part in PIBID	39	7.52	1.62
	Total	75	7.79	1.62
Factor 4 – Self-exposure to strangers and new situations	did internship; took part in PIBID	19	3.84	1.31
	did internship; did not take part in PIBID	14	4.49*	1.12
	did not do internship; took part in PIBID	3	3.63	1.54
	did not do internship; did not take part in PIBID	39	3.46*	1.08
	Total	75	3.75	1.20
Factor 5 – Self-control of aggression	did internship; took part in PIBID	19	1.08	0.60
	did internship; did not take part in PIBID	14	1.42	0.42
	did not do internship; took part in PIBID	3	1.50	0.41
	did not do internship; did not take part in PIBID	39	0.99	0.73
	Total	75	1.12	0.65

*p<0,05

Table 3. Comparison of Social Skills between the groups of students that participated or not in the internship and PIBID

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

From the data presented in Table 3, it can be observed that in the majority of factors, except in 2, and in the general score, the median of those who did not do the internship nor took part in PIBID is lower than the other groups that have undergone one of these experiences. However, only in factor 4 - self-exposure to strangers, there was a statistically

significant difference between the realization of the internship and the repertoire of social skills. Thus, the group of students who did the internship had a higher median value, and the group that had no practical experience (neither internship nor PIBID) had a lower median value in the evaluation of factor 4.

With regard to the comparison of social skills and work of the students, done by the *t-Test*, there was no statistically significant difference between social skills and the current work, which can be explained due to the low number of participants (N=7). In relation to the work variable, in Table 4, we can observe the results obtained in the comparison of social skills and previous work, that is, those students who had already worked, but who, at the time of the research, were unemployed.

	Has worked	N	Median	SD	t value	dF
General score	no	28	94.10	15.60		
	yes	47	98.31	17.41		
Factor 1 – Confrontation and self-assertion with risk	no	28	8.09	2.61		
	yes	47	9.04	3.27		
Factor 2 – Self-affirmation in the expression of positive feeling	no	28	9.18	1.54		
	yes	47	8.74	1.81		
Factor 3 – Conversation and social easiness	no	28	7.57	1.61		
	yes	47	7.91	1.63		
Factor 4 – Self-exposure to strangers and new situations	no	28	3.51	1.12		
	yes	47	3.90	1.24		
Factor 5 – Self-control of aggressiveness	no	28	0.91	0.70	-2.09*	73
	yes	47	1.24	0.60		

*p<0,05

Table 4. Comparison of social skill repertoire of participants who have already worked with those who have not worked

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Of the 75 participating students, it is noted that 28 had never worked and 47 of them had had some type of work before. The results show that the average repertoire of social skills of those students who had already worked is higher in the general score and in all factors except from factor 2 - Self-affirmation in the expression of positive feeling.

The comparison showed a statistically significant difference in factor 5, that is, students who worked at the time of data collection or who had at least one professional experience had a higher median in the factor related to self-control of aggressiveness. This result is intertwined with that of Table 3, in which those students who had had some practical internship experience or PIBID also obtained a higher median value in this factor, possibly due to the fact that those who had had some kind of practical experience (job, internship or PIBID) had more opportunities for direct contact with different people and opinions, and were likely exposed to criticism and warnings more often. With these results, it can be inferred that the

internship and PIBID experiences (experience of professional practice) have produced positive results in the repertoire of social skills of these students, especially in factor 5.

Table 5 shows the results of the correlation between social skills, age and socioeconomic status. It should be noted that the number of students for the analysis of correlation between social skills and age was reduced to 72, since we chose to exclude three participants aged over 40, as the assessment of social skills may change according to age (Grol & Andretta, 2016), leaving the group of students between the ages of 18 and 32 years old.

Social Skill Factors	Socioeconomic status (N= 75) r value	Age (N=72) r value
General score	-0.15	0.19
Factor 1 – Confrontation and self-assertion with risk	-0.23*	0.39**
Factor 2 – Self-affirmation in the expression of positive feeling	-0.12	-0.02
Factor 3 – Conversation and social easiness	-0.03	0.04
Factor 4 – Self-exposure to strangers and new situations	-0.016	0.21
Factor 5 – Self-control of aggression	-0.08	-0.00

* $p \leq 0,05$; ** $p \leq 0,01$

Table 5. Correlation between social skills, socioeconomic status and age

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

With the results of Table 5, it can be observed that there was a positive and statistically significant correlation between age and repertoire of social skills only for factor 1 of social skills ($r = 0,39^{**}$, $p < 0,01$). That is, the older the person, the higher the median value for the factor 'Confrontation and self-assertion with risk'. This result indicates that the closer to 30 years old, the higher the median values of a person's social skills in dealing with situations that require confrontation self-assertion with risk, such as behaviors when defending one's rights, acting assertively, controlling anxiety in a variety of situations, approaching a partner for an intimate relation, coping with unfair criticism, being with strangers, and so on.

Regarding the results of the correlation between social skills and socioeconomic status, the data revealed that the higher the socioeconomic status, the lower the values of the social skills medians for factor 1 'Confrontation and self-assertion with risk' ($r = -0,23$; $p < 0,05$) and, consequently, the lower the socioeconomic status, the higher the social skills in factor 1. Ahmetoglu and Acar (2016) verified similarities in their study in which preservice teachers with lower socioeconomic status had higher values in social communication skills. This may be related to the fact that people with a lower socioeconomic status are more exposed to situations that require advocacy of rights, maintenance of self-esteem, and anxiety control. This assumption may relate, for example, to the context of the university, to the need for a student with a low socioeconomic status to claim scholarships, food, housing, among others.

4 DISCUSSION

The results of the research answered the research questions and confirmed the hypothesis that the practical experiences (Internship and PIBID) in Special Education undergraduate students relate to better indicators of social skills, especially in relation to Factor 4 - Self-exposure to strangers and new situations. This result can be explained by the fact that, during internships, students are constantly exposing themselves to strangers and new situations, since many, in most cases, have never had contact with the classroom and/or with students with or without disabilities. In addition, during the internships, as students apply different activities and have contact with different teachers, students, staff, administration and coordination of the school, they end up experiencing new situations and having to adapt to them. In contrast, those students who did not attend the internship or PIBID did not have, until then, the opportunity to have a practical experience during the undergraduate program, as in the majority of students who are in the first and second years of the course.

In addition, the fact that students who have already worked had a statistically significant higher median value in skill factor 5, that is, in self-control of aggressiveness, confirms that social skills can be apprehended in everyday situations, when the person is more often exposed to certain social interactions (Del Prette et al., 2015). People who have already worked are more likely to have had experiences in socializing with bosses and co-workers who required the training of skills such as controlling their aggressiveness at times they receive criticism and warnings. In this sense, the importance of the university in the acquisition and development of social skills is highlighted, this environment being one of the most favorable places for social interactions, academic growth and learning for best practice in the profession that will be pursued in the future (Soares & Del Prette, 2015; Lima & Soares, 2015).

Specifically in the case of Special Education, the acquisition and improvement of these skills will be of paramount importance for working with TPSE students and the accomplishment of co-teaching and collaborative consulting (Rosin-Pinola & Del Prette, 2014). As emphasized by Mendes, Vilaronga and Zerbato (2014), one of the components for the functioning of collaborative teaching is interpersonal communication, with knowledge that, one has to know oneself, to know his/her partner, the students and their profession. Such knowledges and components are closely linked to classes of social skills involving communication, civility, assertiveness, rights, citizenship, empathy, work, and expressing positive feelings (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2001).

It is noteworthy that factor 2 - Self-affirmation in the expression of positive feeling - was the only one that, in the group average, showed a result below the median. This data corroborates the researches of Del Prette et al. (2004), with students of the Psychology course, and Bolsoni-Silva, Loureiro and Oliveira's research (2010), with university students of the Industrial Design course who also verified scores below the median in factors 2 and 5. It is necessary to reflect on the reasons for these results, since they may portray a peculiar characteristic of university students depending on the specific stage of development they are experiencing, but it may also represent a cultural issue related to university admission (e.g. more competitive environment than cooperative, initially living with strangers).

Regarding age, the data found in this study confirm the idea of Del Prette et al. (2015) that a person becomes socially skillful and improves his/her social competence throughout life, as the results found here have shown that the closer to the age of 30, the easier it is to deal with the factor related to confrontation and self-assertion with risk. As for the socioeconomic status, it was observed that people with higher socioeconomic status have more difficulty in factor 1 (Confrontation and self-assertion with risk) and, with this, it can be inferred that there is no need to use these skills in situations that permeate their interactive contexts. In this sense, Leme, Del Prette, Koller, & Del Prette (2016) argue that the development of social skills is intertwined with the possibilities that certain contexts of interaction offer (Leme et al., 2016), as the more opportunities a person has to engage in interpersonal relationships, the greater the chances are of improving his/her repertoire of social skills.

Finally, the importance of the knowledge of social skills of the university students is emphasized, as the demands of the labor market prescribe the quality of social interactions, teamwork, creativity, autonomy in decision making, good communication, among others (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2001). In addition, in understanding this repertoire, undergraduate courses may offer conditions for the development of these social skills throughout its duration (Matos, 2009).

5 CONCLUSION

The Teaching Degree in Special Education promotes the development and/or improvement of social skills, especially in a practical way during the last two years of the course, when these students are enrolled in curricular activities of internship. However, it is considered extremely relevant that social skills can be developed or improved in an intentional and structured way as part of the professional education of these students, especially the teaching degree in Special Education students, and in an integrated way to the curriculum, such as in disciplines focused on this specific knowledge, in order to favor and assist future teachers not only in transmitting this knowledge to their student, but also in maintaining and improving the quality of relations in their work and personal environment.

It is considered that the present study is of great relevance for the contribution of future studies that may comprise other forms of evaluation of the repertoire of social skills of university students, like, for example, the multimodal, as Del Prette and Del Prette (2011c) point out. It is also believed that longitudinal studies are necessary to understand samples of the same students in the first year and the last year of the course, in order to contemplate possible changes in social skills and also in social educational skills, after the various practical experiences that permeate the academic context. Studies that consider the impacts of academic education as an environment for acquisition and improvement of skills, insertion and maintenance of these skills in the work environment after Graduation should be considered.

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