

## Life skills education program among high school children: An intervention study

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### Abstract

**Background:** In the present study an attempt was made to study the efficacy of life skills education program among high school children, who were referred for academic backwardness. **Methodology:** Objectives of the present study were to assess the needs of referred children, impart the appropriate life skills and test the efficacy of the intervention. 15 ninth standard children consisting of 6 girls and 9 boys were referred by teachers in the school. The data was collected using life skills scale (Vrunda, 2011) and through interview method. The present study was carried out using AB Single Subject Design and the data was analyzed using non-parametric tests. Need Assessment show that the children had lack of self-awareness, Creative Thinking and Critical Thinking Skills. Based on the findings, the researcher used life skills activities suggested by WHO and implemented using group work approach.

**Results:** Results show that out of 15 children 13 children's parents are either illiterates or educated up to 10th standard only and have very poor parental supervision. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test shows that there is a significant difference between baseline and post intervention in the domains of Self Awareness ( $p < 0.05$ ), Creative Thinking ( $p < 0.001$ ) and Critical Thinking Skills ( $p < 0.01$ ). It was also observed that parental supervision and academic performance had been increased significantly.

**Discussion and Conclusion:** Life skills are very important in each stage of life to cope with the various situations. Schools should integrate life skills into their academic activities and teachers should be trained on this. There is a need to identify children who have lack of skills in rural areas and teach them in order to make them compete with their urban counterparts

**Key words:** Life skill education, adolescents, intervention

## Background

School education plays a vital role to develop an effective personality in one's life. Compilation of life skills education with school education would change the views of students about life. They can help the child to build a good personality and strengthen his/her knowledge in all settings to generate an effective future. Life skills education can be a remedial measure for eradicating the problems such as academic backwardness, communication, behavioral and emotional problems. Life skills education would provide an arena for acquiring these skills in various situations in life.

**According to WHO (1997)**, “the abilities for adaptive and positive that enable individual to deal effectively with the demands and challenges” are called life skills.

**According to UNICEF (2001)** “Life-skills based education is -behavior change or behavior development approach -designed to address a balance of three areas i.e., knowledge, attitude, and skills”.

Overall life skills are innumerable and the nature and definition of life skills are likely to differ across cultures and settings. However, analysis of the life skills field suggests that there are core set of skills that are at the heart of skills-based initiatives for the promotion of the health and well-being of children and Adolescents.

WHO has described ten life skills. They are

- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Creative thinking
- Critical thinking
- Effective communication
- Interpersonal relationship skills
- Self-awareness

- Empathy
- Coping with emotions
- Coping with stress

**Decision-making** helps to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health if young people actively make decisions about their actions in relation to health by assessing the different options and what effects different decisions may have.

**Problem solving** enables to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain.

**Creative thinking** contributes to both decision-making and problem solving by enabling us to explore the available alternatives and various consequences of our actions or non-action. It helps us to look beyond our direct experience, and even if no problem is identified, or no decision is to be made, creative thinking can help us to respond adaptively and with flexibility to the situations of our daily lives.

**Critical thinking** is an ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behavior, such as values, peer pressure, and the media. Effective communication means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations. This means being able to express opinions and desires, but also needs and fears. Moreover, it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.

**Interpersonal relationship** skills help us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well-being. It may mean keeping good relations with family members, which are an important source of social support. It may also mean being able to end relationships constructively.

**Self-awareness** includes our recognition of ourselves, of our character, of our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognize when we are stressed or feel under pressure. It is also often a prerequisite for effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy for others.

**Empathy** is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person, even in a situation that we may not be familiar with. Empathy can help us to understand and accept others who may be very different from ourselves, which can improve social interactions, for example, in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity. Empathy can also help to encourage nurturing behavior towards people in need of care and assistance, or tolerance, as is the case with AIDS sufferers, or people with mental disorders, who may be stigmatized and ostracized by the very people they depend upon for support.

**Coping with emotions** involves recognizing emotions in others, being aware of how emotions influence behavior and being able to respond to emotions appropriately and ourselves. Intense emotions, like anger or sorrow can have negative effects on our health if we do not react appropriately.

**Coping with stress** is about recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help to control our levels

of stress. This may mean that we take action to reduce the sources of stress, for example, by making changes to our physical environment or lifestyle. Alternatively, it may mean learning how to relax, so that tensions created by unavoidable stress do not give rise to health problems.

The life skills described above are dealt with here as far as they can be taught to young people as abilities that they can acquire through learning and practice. For example, problem solving, as a skill, can be described as a series of steps to go through, such as: 1) define the problem; 2) think of all the different kinds of solutions to the problem; 3) weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of each; 4) chose the most appropriate solution and plan how to realize it.

## Review of literature

Sharma.S. (2003) has conducted a study on “Measuring life skills of adolescent in a secondary school Kathmandu; an experience”. The objectives of this study were to develop a scale to measure life skills and to assess the levels of life skills in adolescents of a secondary school at Kathmandu. The study was a descriptive, cross sectional survey of adolescents, also supported by qualitative techniques with focus group discussion and interviews. Sample size of the study was 347 adolescents. Results shows that 176 adolescents (51%) had life skill scores above the mean, and was termed as having “high level” of life skills and 171(49%) had “low level” of life skills scores. Mother’s education was significantly associated with increased level of life skills in adolescents ( $P=0.001$ ). Most of the teachers were not aware of the concept of life skills. Maternal education was significantly associated with higher life skill levels in adolescents. Connectedness and family support were other important factors influencing the level of life skills in the adolescents.

Sandhya Khera (2012) has conducted a study on “A Study Of Core Life Skills Of Adolescents In Relation To Their Self Concept Developed Through Yuva School Life Skill Programme”. Objectives of the study were to study the relationship between Core affective life skills and Self-Concept of adolescents developed through YUVA School Life Skills Programme and to study the relationship between Core cognitive life skills and Self Concept of adolescents developed through YUVA School Life Skills Programme. The study investigated the relationship between self concept and core life skills selected randomly 500 adolescents studying in secondary classes of sarvodaya schools situated in south Delhi under gone for YUVA (SLP). The Major findings of the study that there is a positive co-relation between Core Affective Life Skill and Self Concept of adolescents which means those who posses these essential skills are better confidence in all aspects.

Parvathy.V. (2015) has conducted study on “Impact of life skills Education on adolescent in rural area”. The objectives of the study were to know the knowledge of life skills among adolescent and to study the impact of life skills education on current knowledge level. The study was carried out in the coastal area school in the taluk of Karunagapally, Kerala, India.

A sample size of 57 was taken with 30 samples in experimental group and 27 samples in experimental group. The experimental and experiment–delayed groups were found similar in their socio-demographic status. The study has revealed significant impact of Life Skills Education training on adolescents. This opens up arena to conduct more research in this field with modifications and contextualization of training modules. Contextualization needs to cater the needs of the target group especially when it comes to the backward sections of the community.

TarunDeep Kaur2011 has conducted study on ‘A Study Of Impact Of Life Skills Intervention Training On Emotional Intelligence Of College Adolescents’. The study was carried out to examine the effects of an intervention program on the emotional intelligence of college adolescents. Generalized Self Efficacy Scale, Sevenfold Emotional Intelligence Scale and Cooper Smith Self Esteem Inventory were used for pre and post test. The students who were low on test norms were selected for the EQ development program for three months. The results were analyzed using paired sample t test to examine pre post test mean difference which revealed a significant increase in the scores of EQ.

### **Methodology**

Objectives of the present study were to assess the needs of referred children, impart the appropriate life skills and test the efficacy of the intervention. **Hypothesis of the study is that** there is a significant difference between pre and post level of life skills among high school children. The school teachers referred academically backward children for intervention. Total sample size is 15 Children, consisting of 6 girls and 9 boys.

### **Need Assessment and Tools for the study:**

The researcher used Life skill development scale developed by M.N Vrunda was used for needs assessment. The assessment revealed that referred children had lack of skills in three domains i.e., of self-awareness, critical thinking, creative thinking. A semi-structured interview schedule was prepared to assess the demographic details of the respondents.

### **Need assessment and intervention plan:**

Based on the need assessment researcher has planned the activities and conducted the following intervention using WHO life skills manual. (Table 1- Appendix)

## Research Design:

In this study researcher adopted single subject research design, that is A-B Design. This design includes two level of assessment.

Pre intervention assessment (A)– Intervention level– Post assessment (B)

## Intervention process:

As per the needs assessment, researcher has planned the intervention strategy, including activities related to the Creative Thinking, Critical thinking, and Self Awareness skills. Before starting, the activity researcher made children to make a ground rules for the sessions and all children should follow the rules. To conduct the activity researcher did the preparation such as making charts, collecting activity materials. Starting some children was not actively participated in the activities, but after some sessions researcher observed the active participation of all children. Sessions included activities such as playing games, group discussion, and acting. Last session ends up with the lighting candle and sharing feedback. After the last session researcher has given gap and collected the post intervention score, according to these scores there was a significant difference in the pre and post intervention score.

## Analysis of Data:

Socio-demographic details were recorded using qualitative analysis. To know whether there is a significant difference in the pre and post scores of the PSS, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (Non-parametric test) was used. The academic progress was assessed by evaluating progress reports and qualitative reports which had been obtained from parents, teachers, friends and self- observation from the researcher to know the progress in other areas. Before the intervention, the informed assent was obtained from the participant and confidentiality was assured and maintained.

## Results

### Socio demographic details

The age group of the respondents is 14 to 15 years, majority of the respondents father's work as agriculturist, from lower socioeconomic backward, Hindu by religion (90%). About 53% mothers and 26% fathers of children have not attended formal schooling.

The **Table 2** (Appendix) explains about, effectiveness of creative thinking, Critical thinking and Self- Awareness skills intervention. The postintervention score of all three domains is higher than the pre – intervention mean. It shows an increase in the mean value. The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test indicates a significant difference in the Pre-Intervention and Post-Intervention value. Hence, it is concluded that there is a significant improvement in all three domains.

### Implications of the study

The life skills education plays crucial role towards the positive and healthy development of the adolescent. Pre and post score has shown the changes in life skills level of children. These skills make children to come up with new ideas and cope up with the various situations, which comes in day-to-day life. Researcher observed the changes in the children such as some children were not mingling with each other but during the activities children started to mingle, children started participating in activities, talking during the group discussion and lastly increase in confidence level in the communication and behavior of children.

Adoption of life skills education programme in academics will gives more knowledge towards life and it makes a children to grown up an effective personality in society.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Life Skills are very important for each individual. Lack of life skills will lead to problems in the individual's life. Life Skills Education is very important from primary to higher education, especially in the stage of adolescence. The researcher has conducted Intervention with Adolescent group. The results shows that there is a significant difference between pre and post intervention scores. Life skills plays a vital role in building personality and facing the life. Identifying the children with lack of skills and conducting intervention in those areas will bring significant changes in one's life.

Some other studies have shown the positive results of life skill intervention. Most of the researcher suggested that adoption of life skill education in academics is very important and to implement properly in academic teachers should be trained in the life skills education. Sharma (2003) based on his study recommended that training of teacher in the life skill education context and policy of compulsory primary education.

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## Appendix

**Table 1**

Sl	Activities	Skills	Intervention Methodology	No. Of Session
1	Pass the feelings	Critical thinking	Act, playing game, group discussion	1
2	Relationship map	Critical thinking	Drawing relationship map, group discussion, playing games	1
3	I love my self	Self-Awareness, creative thinking	Group discussion, painting, group discussion	1
4	I Wish I hope	Self-Awareness, creative thinking	Group Discussion, meditation	1
5	Value voting	Critical thinking	Playing game, group discussion	1
6	Bad touch	Self-awareness, critical thinking	Video presentation, group discussion, act	1
7	Book of me	Self-Awareness, creative thinking	Making children to write about their life in book and presentation, Group discussion	2

**Table 2**

Skill	Level Of Assessment	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test
Creative Thinking	Pre Test	48.87	9.149	32	62	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Post Test	55.07	5.994	46	66	.001
Critical Thinking	Pre Test	33.60	4.823	24	41	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Post Test	38.13	3.623	33	46	.003
Self Awareness	Pre Test	36.53	5.502	30	48	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Post Test	42.60	3.355	34	47	.005