

Research Article

Life Skills Acquisition of Higher Secondary Students in Relation to Their Academic Achievement

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ABSTRACT

Life skills are skills that enable individuals to deal effectively with the challenges of everyday life. Realising the importance of life skills education, the investigator has made an attempt to study the relationship between five important life skills and the academic achievement in Higher Secondary students in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu .The findings of the study revealed a positive correlation between the skills. The English medium students seemed to have better Critical Thinking skills than their Tamil counterparts. Private management school students have better Problem Solving skill scores than the government school students. The percentage analysis revealed that in co-education schools, the life skills scores were high whereas the achievement scores were medium.

Keywords: Life Skills, Higher Secondary Students, Academic Achievement, Student Development, Education

INTRODUCTION

The term 'life skills' refers to a broad group of psychosocial and interpersonal skills that can help an individual to make important decisions, communicate effectively and navigate this increasingly complex world. Beyond reading writing and arithmetic, a child needs to develop a broad set of competencies-cognitive, social and practical to cope with challenge and

confidently make its way in the world. WHO defines 'life skills' as the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. WHO (1994) identified a core set of life skills that included problem solving, decision making, goal setting, critical thinking, creative thinking, communication skills, assertiveness, self awareness, empathy and skills for coping with stress and emotions. These skills are pivotal to lead a healthy and happy life.

In this present study of life skills of students in the adolescent group belonging to the Higher Secondary classes, five skills have been focused on mainly, namely Problem Solving skill, Decision Making skill, Critical Thinking skill, Stress Coping skill and Goal Setting skill. The idea of the study is to find the interplay between the skills. Perhaps, a deeper insight into the five skills taken for the study would be appropriate before proceeding into the details of the study.

Problem solving skill

This means the ability to identify the problem correctly, understanding its source, eliminating or reducing the source, thinking of alternative solutions and choosing the best option possible. Wikipedia states, "Problem Solving is a mental process. Considered the most complex of all intellectual functions, it has been defined as a higher order cognitive process that requires the modulation and control of more routine or fundamental skills."

Decision making skill

This is closely linked with the Problem solving skill as they both require creativity in identifying and developing options. Good Decision making requires a mixture of skills: creative development and identification of options, clarity of judgement, firmness of decision and effective implementation. Thus we see that the Decision Making skill calls for objectivity and clear thinking rather than emotion based and instinctive action.

Critical Thinking skill

The concept of critical thinking has its roots in ancient Greece-Kriticos (meaning discerning judgement) and Kriterion (meaning standards). Etymologically, the word implies the development of a discerning judgement based on standards. It is that mode of thinking about any subject, content or problem in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her

thinking skilfully analyzing, assessing and reconstructing it. It is self-directed, self-motivated and self-corrective thinking.

Stress coping skill

The process of managing stress is called coping.’ Coping is cognitive and behavioural effort to master, reduce or tolerate the internal and external demands that are created by the stressful transaction.’ (Folkman and Lazarus 1980) Vol 2”All the behaviours to erase the aversive effects of stress are coping behaviours” [Jeanne Civil 2003]. Giridano and others [1997] define ‘stress management is the ability to reduce stress or to cope in competent manner with stressors.’

Goal Setting skill

Setting and achieving goals play an important role in a successful personal development plan. A goal setting system improves chances of success. Goal setting raises one's self confidence and properly set goals can be incredibly motivating. Goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, and relevant and time bound. Effective goal setting requires knowing what one wants to achieve and how to achieve it in a focussed and decisive manner by doing the right actions in a lesser time frame.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The Higher Secondary students are adolescents. The adolescents are in a stage of sorting out their childhood habits and values and laying the foundation for a mature adult personality. The adolescent stage calls for the actualization of potentials, achievement of adequate coping styles, sharpening of cognitive powers namely the ability of the mind to think critically, analyze, reason out and logically work out solutions to problems in daily life and take decisions independently with confidence weighing the pros and cons of a situation. The importance of the application of life skills at this stage of life lies in the fact that it lays the foundation for a well-developed personality in later life with good self-concept, high self-esteem and socially acceptable behaviour.

HYPOTHESIS

- * There is no significant difference between the mean scores of life skill scores of students in terms of the independent variables.

- * There is no correlation between the life skills of the students.
- * There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the problem solving skills of the students in terms of the independent variables.
- * There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the Decision making skills of the students in terms of the independent variables.
- * There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the Critical Thinking skills of the students in terms of the independent variables.

METHODOLOGY

The survey method was selected for the present study.

SAMPLE

For the present study, 32 schools in Coimbatore city in Tamil Nadu state were selected. The schools were located in urban and rural areas. They were co-educational or just boys' or girls' schools. They were government or private management schools with English or Tamil as the medium of instruction. A sample of 623 students was selected by the random stratified sampling method.

TOOLS USED

To know the background information of the school students, a general information schedule was used. The tools for assessing the five life skills were prepared by the investigator. They were tested for validity and reliability. The over-all percentage of marks obtained in the 10th Std. Board Examinations was taken as the achievement score of the students.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

- * "t" test to find the significant difference between the mean scores of life skills scores of students in terms of the independent variables.
- * Pearson's Product Moment Correlation to find the correlation between the life skills and also between each life skill and achievement.
- * Percentage analysis of total life skill score and achievement test score of the school students in terms of the type of school.

- * ANOVA test was used to find out whether there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the Problem Solving and Decision making skills of the students in terms of the independent variables.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

H_0 - no significant difference is observed

H_1 - significant difference is observed

TABLE-1:
SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MEAN SCORES OF
LIFE SKILL SCORES OF STUDENTS IN TERMS OF THE INDEPENDENT
VARIABLES.

Independent variable	Categories	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	f value Deviation(S1,S2)	Remarks
Management	Govt	402	80.9422	4.74772	-4.991	H_0 accepted
	Private	221	82.8063	3.88272		
Gender	Male	207	81.4868	4.80987	-0.452	H_0 accepted
	Female	416	81.6616	4.41275		
Medium	English	310	81.9974	4.40285	2.159	H_0 accepted
	Tamil	313	81.2134	4.65656		
Locality	Rural	69	81.0943	4.26568	-0.987	H_0 accepted
	Urban	554	81.6669	4.57874		

Table -1 shows that English medium students have higher level of life skill scores compared to the tamil medium students.

TABLE-2:
SIGNIFICANCE OF INTER CORRELATION BETWEEN THE FIVE LIFE SKILL
SCORES OF STUDENTS

	Problem Solving Score	Decision Making	Critical Thinking Score	Stress Coping Score	Goal Setting Score
Problem Solving Score	1	.633"	.412"	.158°	.217"
Decision Making	.633"	1	.502"	.232"	.230"
Critical Thinking Score	.412"	.502"	1	.333"	.403"
Stress Coping Score	.158"	.232"	.333"	1	.349*'
Goal Setting Score	.217**	.230"	.403"	.349"	1

As shown in Table-2 a Pearson product-moment correlation was rllil to determine the relationship between an individual's five life skill scores. There was a strong, positive correlation between life skill scores, which was statistically significant. It is worth noting that the problem solving skill score has the highest positive correlation (0.633) with decision making skill score, the critical thinking skill score has highest positive correlation (0.502) with decision making skill score, goal setting score has highest positive correlation with critical thinking score.

TABLE-3:

PERCENTAGE LEVEL OF TOTAL LIFE SKILLS SCORE AND ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORE OF THE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN TERMS OF THE TYPE OF SCHOOL. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

Type of School	Total	Life Skill Level			Achievement Level		
		Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
	Count	0	14	85	0	3	96

Boys	% of Total	.0%	2.2%	13.62%	.0%	.5%	15.4%
Coed	Count	3	151	253	24	206	177
	% of Total	.5%	24.2%	40.6%	3.9%	33.1%	28.4%
Girls	Count	2	21	94	32	32	85
	% of Total	.3%	3.4%	15.1%	.1%	5.1%	13.6%

Achievement - ≤ 50 low , 51-69 medium , ≥ 70 high

Life skill - ≤ 65 low , 66-79 medium , ≥ 80 high

Table-3 shows that most of the school students have higher life skill scores and higher achievement scores. In terms of boys school, the life skill scores and achievement scores are high. In terms of co-ed school, the life skill scores are high whereas the achievement scores are medium. In terms of girls school, the life skill scores and achievement scores are high.

TABLE-4:

ANOVA TEST TO FIND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MEAN SCORES OF THE PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS OF THE STUDENTS IN TERMS OF THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES.

Problem solving skills in terms of Independent Variables	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remarks
Gender of students	161.569	1	161.569	1.523	.218	H_0 accepted
	65858.290	621	106.052			
Management type of schools	2035.723	1	2035.723	19.758	.000	H_0 accepted
	63984.136	621	103.034			
	104.394	1	104.394			

Medium of schools	65915.465	621	106.144	.984	.322	H ₀ accepted
Locality of the schools	5.102	52	.098	.994	.489	H ₀ accepted

Table -4 shows that since the sigma value .000 is lesser than .05, there is a significant difference between the mean scores of problem solving skills of students in terms of the management type of the school of the students.

TABLE-5:

**SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MEAN
SCORES OF THE DECISION MAKING SKILLS OF THE STUDENTS IN TERMS
OF THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES.
ANOVA**

Decision Making Skills in terms of Independent Variables	Sum of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.	Remarks
Medium of schools	Between Groups	1228.037	1	1228.037	13.858	0	H ₀ is accepted
	Within Groups	55029.69	621	88.615			
Gender of students	Between Groups	1.921	1	1.921	0.021	0.884	H ₀ is accepted
	Within Groups	56255.806	621	90.589			
Management type of schools	Between Groups	6103.042	1	6103.042	75.566	0	H ₀ is accepted
	Within Groups	50154.685	621	80.764			
Locality of the schools	Between Groups	5.18	52	0.1	1.011	0.457	H ₀ is accepted

	Within Groups	56.178	570	0.099			
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Table-5 shows that since the sigma value .000 is lesser than .05, there is a significant difference between the mean scores of decision making skills of students in terms of the management type of the school and also the medium of schools. Private School students have better decision making skill scores than the government school students. English medium students have better decision making skill scores than the tamil medium students.

FINDINGS

- * There was a significant difference between the mean scores of life skill scores of students in terms of the medium of instruction.
- * There was a strong positive correlation between the life skills scores especially between the problem solving skill score and the decision making skill score.
- * In terms of boys' and girls' schools the percentage of life skill scores and achievement scores are high whereas in terms of co-ed schools the percentage of life skill scores are high and achievement scores are medium.
- * There was a significant difference between the mean scores of problem solving skills of students in terms of the type of management of schools.
- * There was a significant difference between the mean scores of Decision making skills in terms of the management type of the schools and also the medium of the schools.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed (from table 1) that English medium school students had a higher level of life skill scores compared to the Tamil medium students. The problem solving skill and the critical thinking skill had a high positive correlation with the decision making skill also the goal setting skill had a high positive correlation with the critical thinking skill (table 2). The percentage of achievement scores was medium in co-ed schools and the percentage of life skills scores was high in boys', girls' and co-ed .type of school(table 3). Private management school students had a better problem solving skill than government school students (table 4).Private

school students and English medium students had better Decision making skill scores (Table 5).

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