

LIFE SKILLS AND PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS AMONG ADOLESCENTS: A STUDY

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Abstract

Adolescence state is known for stress and storm. Owing to their energy and enthusiasm, adolescents are considered as productive members of the society, constituting more than one-fifth of India's population. However, these people, when devoid of life skills, create disturbances in the society, particular when they are in educational institutions. Thus, encouraged by such thought, the present study was conducted to understand them in life skills and their personal effectiveness in selected colleges of Nizamabad district in Telangana State. Around 120 adolescents pursuing intermediate level of education participated in this study to whom a structured questionnaire containing standardized scales to measure life skills and Personal effectiveness was administered. Results suggest that the life skills are not very encouraging in relation to their personal effectiveness. Adolescents specifically differed in their Critical thinking, Decision making and Coping with stress according to type of college. Implications are drawn for the future research and practice.

1. Introduction

Adolescence is popularly known as the age of transition. According to World Health Organization, adolescence is the period from ten to nineteen years old, (Prajina and Preamsingh, 2014). In this period individuals are pigeonholed by drastic changes in physical, psychological and social maturities. It is the period in which he/she starts to integrate himself/herself as a part of society and is resulted in the realization of morality and ethical principles. It is a period of unrealism. (Prajina and Preamsingh, 2014). Dynamism, ideas, energy, creativity, vigor, liveliness, momentum, curious, original and keen are all synonyms of the word Adolescence or Teenage (RGNIYD, 2006).

This is a period when adolescents evolve into adults with newly discovered independence and renewed responsibilities. They are constantly in search of their own new identity. They tend to question and appreciate the values of the adult world and try to assert their identity. During adolescence they need to develop skills that will help them to grow into caring and responsible adults. When adolescents are supported and encouraged by caring adults, they thrive in unimaginable ways, becoming resourceful and contributing members of their families and societies.(Pujar and Patil,2000).

2. Defining Adolescence

The World Health Organization refers to people aged 10-19 years as adolescents. The term 'young people' refers to those between 10 to 24 years. The United Nations' defines youth as those who are between the ages of 15-24 years (Jena at al, 2006).

In India, Policies and Programs define the adolescent age group differently, depending on their objectives. The Programs of the National Youth Policy consider adolescents as belonging to the 13-19 years age group, The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) 11-18 years and the Reproductive and Child Health Program (RCH 2), consider 10-19 years as the group to be covered under adolescent health services. The constitution of India and labor laws define a child up to 14 years of age, while the UN system has accepted 10-19 years as adolescent age group. The consensus by and large seems to be towards recognizing 10-19 years as the adolescent age for the purposes of policy formulation and planning interventions. Despite variation in the age ranges, adolescents are characterized by the most challenging phase of life.

The individual's capacity for abstract and critical thinking also develops. Adolescence is also known as the period of stress and storm. Because their mind is pooled with limitless thoughts; results in stress and frustration. They have to satisfy certain needs. Successful consultation of those needs upshot better social adjustment. Adolescence (10-19 years) is a susceptible and important phase in an individual's life and is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood and embodies significant physical, physiological, cognitive, psychological and social changes resulting in sexual, psychosocial and behavioral maturation. It is the period of development from childhood to adulthood and the child moves from dependency to autonomy.

3. Adolescent Population status in India

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines “adolescent” as an individual between 10 to 19 years of age. According to Census of India 2011 report, 20.9% of population in India comprise of adolescents (10 to 19 years). The trend is static or small decreasing trend compared to 21.9% in 2001 census.

4. The Problems of Adolescents Today

Adolescence is the age of change. It is a vulnerable time when kids can develop unhealthy habits that grow into problems in their adult life. Behavior issues of adolescence, which are quite common, also crop up during this time, making it impossible for parents to reach out to their teenagers. The only way to deal with needs and problems at this age is to know about them and be ready to face them. Such as: Physical changes, Emotional changes and problems, Behavioral changes, Substance use and abuse, Educational challenges, Health Problems, Social problems – dating and relationships Sexual health – unplanned pregnancy and STIs, Addiction to cyberspace and Aggression and violence, etc.,.

In addition Adolescents are vulnerable emotional and physically. Without proper nutrition and healthcare, they are susceptible to illnesses. According to a 2015 WHO report, 1.3 million adolescents died in 2015, a majority of who had preventable diseases. Research studies have revealed that around 50% of mental health disorders that adults have, begin at the age of 14. In fact, one-third of adolescent deaths are suicide triggered by depression. If your child is overly moody and not eating or sleeping at all, it is imperative you get professional help for them. Thus, the problems of adolescents are myriad and it's demanding the attention of the researchers.

5. Need of Life Skills for Adolescents

Adolescence is the most critical phase of an individual. It denotes the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood marked by conspicuous physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes. The inbuilt taboos existing in the society in the form of control and support from the near and dear ones guide the adolescents to grow into a mature adult. Lifestyles have changed due to globalization and technology invasion in day to day affairs in a big way. The highly competitive world of today and the absence of traditional norms and support have heightened the stress among adolescents resulting in multiple mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, rejection, diffidence, anger, confliction in interpersonal relationship and failure. (Smith et al. 2004)

6. Importance of Life Skills

Life Skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (WHO, 1996). UNICEF defines Life Skills as “a behavior change or behavior development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills”. Life Skills are those abilities that help to promote physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and competence to face the realities of life. Life skills can be broadly classified into: Social Skills and negotiation skills which includes self-awareness, empathy, effective communication and interpersonal relationship; Thinking Skills like critical and creative thinking, problem solving and decision making and Coping Skills like coping with stress and emotion. Life skill education leads to capacity building of a person, helps in developing resiliency skills and prevention from taking risks. Life skills enable the individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities, i.e. it enables the person to decide what to do, when to do and how to do.

7. Core Life Skills

The WHO has recommended ten important life skills necessary to our day today life. They are self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, problem Solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationship, coping with stress and coping with emotion. These skills can be implemented to them only through proper intervention in the school and colleges.

8. Life Skills Education

Life skill education is a value added program which aims to provide students with strategies to make healthy choices that contribute to a meaningful life. It helps adolescents to understand their self and to assess their skills, abilities and areas of development. It also helps adolescents to get along with other people and adjust with their environment and making responsible decision. (Aparna & Raakhee, 2011)

According to CBSE Manual for teachers' on Life Skills Education, adolescence is a critical period for the development of self-identity. The process of acquiring a sense of self is linked to physiological changes and also learning to negotiate the social and psychological demands of being young adults. Responsible handling of issues like independence, intimacy and peer group dependence are concerns that need to be recognized and appropriately support needs to be given to cope with them.(Bahrain, 2016)

9. Main Objective of Life Skill Education

The main objective of life skill education is to enable the learner to develop a concept of oneself as a person of worth and dignity. Life skill education is a basic learning need for all individuals. Various skills like leadership, responsibility, communication, intellectual capacity, self-esteem, Interpersonal skill etc. extends its maximum level, if it is practicing effectively. We need to create life skill education as the cornerstone of various youth programmers and an integral part of our formal education process. (Aparna & Raakhee, 2011)

10. Need for study

Every one of us faces challenges in our lives. With the changing environment, it becomes important for an individual to adapt to the change and cope up with it. Keeping a positive attitude and moving forward is very essential to survive and achieve something. The capability of an individual to deal with these challenges with a positive attitude and conquer them efficiently is known as life skills.

Learning the traits of team work, mutual respect, communication and stress management are very important to achieve success in today's life. The life skills have to be included in schools curriculum so that students learn them and excel in these skills. The curriculum aims at improving the social skills, thinking skills and emotional skills of students.

Social skills train students in blending well with the society. This includes proper communication skills and building better and strong relations. Developing an understanding of people around us is very important. Students are expected to have moral values and be helpful. We want students to be aware of their status and importance to the society. They must be aware of their responsibilities as the future citizens of our nation.

Each individual has a unique way of dealing with situations. Thinking skills helps students to cope up with challenges of life. Problem solving and decision making are key concepts of thinking skills. Students must know how to deal with their difficulties and make right decisions to solve their problems. Thinking out of the box is very important to stand out amongst the crowd. Creative and practical way of thinking is encouraged.

Students' ability to control their emotions comes under emotional skills. The way they express their emotions, feel and deal with it is different for every individual. The school focuses on helping them with stress management and coping up with their emotions.

There is a need to teach students how to act responsibly using life skills. They have the ability and knowledge, but to be able to convert it to appropriate actions at the need of time, students must be well aware of their contribution to the society and their responsibilities. It is to create a positive environment among students and solve their behavioral health issues. Life skills target students of age group 10-18, since they are most prone to emotional issues due to problems like peer pressure, career worries, relationship issues, etc.

Life skills educations also strengthen the bond between the teacher and students. Students develop a positive attitude towards themselves and their colleagues. Along with knowledge and learning, students are taught to implement it on real life problems, hence helping them develop to their full potential. This results in self-motivation and confidence building. Students learn to create a healthy environment and motivate those who are around them. Life skills education helps in creating a strong positive powered force of citizens who in the coming future will contribute to the society. It facilitates character building and preserves the values of society.

The current scenario of adolescents revealed by increased depression, increased suicidal rates, increased drug use is the clear indication of the challenges that adolescents' are facing. Information overload, mixed messages from media, press, teachers, and family and from society at large add to the confusing scenario of the assimilating young mind. No doubt that they are at risk because they lack social support to seek accurate information and services. Thus providing an experience that would strengthen adolescent's coping abilities to counter environment al stress and disadvantages with which they sometimes have to cope with while experiencing is an essential need. The purpose of this study is primarily to study the impact of life skill training on adolescents and to understand and explore what can be done at grass root level, starting from the school as school play crucial role in the development of cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional and moral function and competencies in a child. The present study therefore is an attempt to understand the effectiveness of this approach in the Indian setting on adolescent's self-esteem, adjustment level and empathy.

11. The Present study

The present study aims to examine life skills among adolescents in their concluding phase before maturing into adulthood. As they are pursuing their intermediate education, there is a need to understand how equipped is they with life skills and how effective are they in their academic achievements. These are the questions that are pursued in this study. Firstly, this study intends to access the life skills of adolescents with the help of a standardized instrument. Secondly it is assumed that Life Skills should contribute towards Academic Performance among adolescents. Academic Performance is an objective measure of adolescent performance in their annual examination. Lastly, in this study the influence of personal characteristic on Life Skills and Academic Performance are also examine.

12. Objectives

While keeping in view the purposes of the study, the following objectives are formulated and pursued further.

1. To assess the perceived life skills and personal effectiveness of the adolescents.
2. To examine the association between profile of the adolescents and their perceived life skills and personal effectiveness.

13. Hypotheses

In view of the objectives, it was hypothesized that,

H₀₁: Adolescents do not vary in their life skills and Personal effectiveness according to the type of college to which they belong

H₀₂: Life Skills do not predict changes in Personal effectiveness.

14. Methods

14.1. Study Area

The Adolescents studying in intermediate 1st year and 2nd year in Government and private junior Colleges of Nizamabad District participated in this study. Thus, the study area is Nizamabad District, Telangana State.

14.2.Sampling

Among Three Revenue divisions of Nizamabad district, Kamareddy revenue division was Chosen owing to its large number of adolescent population and large number of junior colleges operating therein six revenue mandals are selected from the this revenue division.120 adolescents students were chosen randomly studying in intermediate 1st and 2nd year from 12 junior colleges both government and private. 60 students each belonging to 6 Government colleges and 6 Private colleges participated in the study. Thus the total sample size is 120.

14.3.Method and Tool of Data Collection

Questionnaire method was adopted as it was found suitable to the students. Data Collection was done from the both 1st and 2nd year Intermediate students of select junior colleges. Duration of data collection was two months.

14.4.Measures

In order to measure the study variables, two standardized scales were adopted and used in this study. Firstly, Life Skills Scale developed by Sharma (2003) was used to assess the Life Skills. The scale consists of 31 items measured with 5-point Likert type Scale. The Response Scores ranged from 1 to 5 (where 5 for strongly agree, 1 for strongly disagree). The alpha coefficient of reliability of the scale is .97 which indicates that the scale is highly internally consistent and therefore reliable. Personal effectiveness scale was developed especially for this study was used to measure the extent of personal effectiveness perceived by the students. This scale consists of 14-items, written based on the suggestions made by Richard, Ellis and Neill (2002), were measured with 5-point Likert Type Scale (where 5 for strongly agree, 1 for strongly disagree). The alpha coefficient of reliability of the scale is .92 which indicates that the scale is highly reliable.

14.5.Data Processing

After collecting the data, cleaning was made to ensure that all the questionnaires are complete in all respects and usable for further analysis. With the help of SPSS, tables are made and statistics are computed for the sake of hypothesis testing. Statistical Test like means, standard deviations and f-tests were computed, followed by regression analysis to test the hypotheses formulated.

15. Results and Discussions:

TABLE 1: LIFE SKILLS AND PERSONAL EFFETIVENESS

S.No	Life Skills & Personal Effectiveness	Type of College	N	Mean	S.D	F Value (df = 1,119)	P=
1	Self - Awareness	Government	60	15.15	1.33	0.289	0.592
		Private	60	15.32	2.00		
		Total	120	15.23	1.69		
2	Empathy	Government	60	12.32	2.37	0.090	0.765
		Private	60	12.20	1.86		
		Total	120	12.26	2.12		
3	Interpersonal Relationship	Government	60	12.88	1.54	0.093	0.761
		Private	60	12.80	1.45		
		Total	120	12.84	1.49		
4	Communication	Government	60	12.05	2.58	0.949	0.332
		Private	60	12.47	2.08		
		Total	120	12.26	2.34		
5	Critical Thinking	Government	60	11.15	1.98	7.768	0.006
		Private	60	12.12	1.81		
		Total	120	11.63	1.95		
6	Creative Thinking	Government	60	13.23	1.79	0.439	0.509
		Private	60	13.42	1.18		
		Total	120	13.33	1.51		
7	Decision Making	Government	60	13.37	1.38	8.249	0.005
		Private	60	12.57	1.66		
		Total	120	12.97	1.57		
8	Problem Solving	Government	60	11.82	1.08	0.209	0.649
		Private	60	11.95	1.99		
		Total	120	11.88	1.59		
9	Coping with stress	Government	60	13.00	2.36	7.162	0.009
		Private	60	11.85	2.34		
		Total	120	12.43	2.41		
10	Coping with Emotions	Government	60	12.28	1.91	0.040	0.843
		Private	60	12.35	1.76		
		Total	120	12.32	1.83		
11	Personal Effectiveness	Government	60	89.18	12.00	2.066	0.153
		Private	60	93.12	17.47		
		Total	120	91.15	15.06		

It is clear the table above that, with regard to Self Awareness, Adolescents have score uniformly (Mean= 15.0) on Self Awareness irrespective of the type of college to which they belong.

A similar trend is observed (Mean=12.0) in empathy skills. In other words the Adolescents did not vary according to the type of college.

And it is observed (Mean=13.0) parallel score in Interpersonal Relationship skills among the adolescents irrespective of the type of college to which they belong.

With regard to Creative Thinking Adolescents have score uniformly (Mean=13.0) on creative thinking skills irrespective of the type of college to which they belong. A similar trend is observed (Mean=12.0) in Problem solving skills and in Coping with emotions skills (Mean=12.0). In other words the adolescents did not vary according to the type of college.

With regard to the Critical Thinking Adolescents from private college have scored more (Mean=12.12) than their counter parts in Government college (Mean=11.5). Interestingly *F Value* suggests that such variation in their mean score is statistically significant.

And it is observed that in Decision Making skills, Adolescents from Government college have scored more (Mean=13.37) than their counter parts in Private college (Mean=12.57). *F value* suggests that such variation in their mean score is statistically significant. Similarly in coping with stress skills, Adolescent from Government college have scored more (Mean=13.0) than adolescents from private college (Mean=11.85). *F Value* suggests that such variation in their mean score is statistically significant.

With regard to the *Personal Effectiveness*, Adolescents from private college have scored more (Mean=93.12) than their counter parts in Government college (Mean=89.18), indicating that the adolescents from private colleges perceived themselves more effective personally.

Interestingly, only in case of critical thinking, decision making and coping with stress, the respondents were significantly varying in their means scores according to their college type where in case of the remaining seven life skills and personal effectiveness, their mean variations were not statistically significant which is evident from the f-values presented in the table. This indicates that the adolescent students do not vary in their life skills according to the type of collage that they are studying. In other words, whether they are from Government College or from private college, their life skills are invariant or uniform. Thus, the null hypothesis “Life Skills do not predict changes in Personal effectiveness” stands accepted.

16. Life Skills and Personal Effectiveness

It was hypothesized that “Life Skills do not predict changes in Personal effectiveness”. In order to test this null hypothesis, correlation coefficients and regression analysis were computed while considering life skills as independent variable and personal effectiveness as dependent variable. Results in this regard are presented in the table 2.

TABLE.No.2
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LIFE SKILLS AND PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Model	R	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		Beta		
(Constant)			2.730	0.007
Self-Awareness	.396**	0.124	2.413	0.017
Empathy	.502**	0.190	3.726	0.000
Interpersonal Relationship	.493**	0.023	0.420	0.675
Communication	.376**	0.104	2.116	0.037
Critical Thinking	.400**	0.114	2.221	0.028
Creative Thinking	.629**	0.139	2.379	0.019
Decision Making	.466**	0.106	2.056	0.042
Problem Solving	.596**	0.153	2.807	0.006
Coping with stress	.668**	0.246	4.138	0.000
Coping with Emotions	.625**	0.251	4.483	0.000

R2=0.77

F-Value=41.05

df=10, 199

P=.00

It is quite clear from the table that all the life skills are positively and significantly correlated with personal effectiveness as perceived by the adolescents. To be more specific, coping with stress emerge as a strong correlate of personal effectiveness ($r=.66, P=.00$) followed by creative thinking skill ($r=.62, P=.00$), and coping with emotions ($r=.62, P=.00$). Thus, all of life skills are qualified to be subjected to regression analysis. The results presented in the table 2 suggest that all types of Life Skills contribute to Personal Effectiveness except Interpersonal Relationship Skills this may due to the fact that all the Life Skills are strongly correlated among themselves as a result Interpersonal Relationship even though correlated to Personal Effectiveness it did not significantly effects on Personal Effectiveness.

17. Implications

Life Skills among Adolescents are critical for their success in walks of life. In order to be successful or effective adolescents go through various struggles. These struggles provide adequate lessons which intent builds Life skills.

In this study an attempt is made to understand whether life skills among adolescents pursuing +2 education. Surprisingly the study found that Life Skills among adolescents do not vary significantly accordingly to type of college in which they study this further indicate that faculty members of the colleges should pay attention to the importation of life skills their students has these students are moving form intermediate to Under Graduation.

Further such attempts made by the faculty member encouraged by the academic bodies through exclusive courses on life skills adolescents can become personally effective in their higher level accomplishments.

18. Conclusions

Life Skills among adolescents determines quite a number of outcomes related to their Personal academic and future assignments these life skills will contribute to their success in all works of life. In this context the present study was conducted in Government and Private Colleges of Nizamabad district.

The study found that life skills do not vary significantly among adolescents accordingly to the type of college in which they study. However the study found that Life Skills significantly contribute to Personal Effectiveness among them i.e implications are drawn suggesting faculty members to paly active role. Further academic administrations must introduce courses on Life Skills. So that seriously Life Skills among Adolescents can be improved.

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