

Relationship between Life Skills and Academic Anxiety of Higher Secondary School Students

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Abstract

The prevailing education system has fuelled academic anxiety among the students when they are transferred from secondary level to higher secondary level. This has led to many personality disorders among them. They are not able to meet the real challenges of the world that are beyond their academic life. Such students sorely lack the life skills that are essential for even day -to -day existence. Hence the present study was intended to study the relationship between life skills and academic anxiety of higher secondary school children. Normative survey method was used for the present study. The sample used in the present study was 300 higher secondary school students of Kollam district. The tools used for the study were Life Skills Assessment Scale and Academic Anxiety Scale. The statistical techniques used for analysis of the data were the t-test and Pearson's product moment of correlation coefficient. The study revealed that there is a substantial negative correlation between life skills and academic anxiety of higher secondary level students.

Keywords: Life Skills, Academic Anxiety, Higher Secondary School Students

1. Introduction

“We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the foundation of life. Many of the things we need can wait. The children cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made and his senses are being developed, to him we cannot answer *Tomorrow*. His name is *Today*”.

- Gabriela Mistral, 1948.

As human beings, are the most important assets of a nation, the development of a society and nation are determined largely by these human resources. For this reason, utilizing these resources call for the need of lifelong education, what individuals acquire during formal education is crucial for their future. In the present dynamic society acquisition of knowledge and information alone will not help the pupils to lead a successful life in their later lives. The aim of education all through the ages is to achieve holistic development of the students, and whatever changes have happened in the field of education for ensuring the same, is not sufficient for an individual to address the problems in real life situations. Everyone is struggling with problems and suffers to find the ways to meet the challenges in life. It is essential that everyone masters those basic life skills to solve problems, deals with conflict, thinks critically and creatively, makes decisions, maintains relationship with friends and relatives, is aware about self, manages stress,

cultivate values, cope with disappointments, create feeling of empathy and sympathy, make stability in emotions, respect, tolerate, trusts others and self, shares, listens, moves towards society with positive social feelings, communicates effectively, develops required self-esteem, deals with interpersonal relationship and so on. Therefore the role of education is not just to enable the children to acquire knowledge but also to equip them with the ability to handle the stress and strain, ups and down of life. That is why the 164 nations committed to “Education for All” have included “Life Skills” as a basic learning need for all young pupils. Around the world, life skills based education is being adopted as a means to empower young people in challenging situations.

Life skills are the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life. Adaptive means a person should have the flexibility to adjust according to the changing situations. Positive behavior means, in order to cope with the situation, a person needs to have positive thinking and look at opportunities even in difficult situations. The ten components of life skills identified by WHO are decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, empathy, coping with emotions and coping with stress. Life skills enable us to translate knowledge, attitude and values into actual abilities by helping us decide what to do, when to do and how to do it. Enhancing knowledge exclusively without enhancing life skills may not have practical application. Life skills education is an approach that acts as an instrument of empowerment. Moreover life skills enable adolescent boys and girls to utilize the other skills such as functional, vocational, livelihood and literacy skills better.

Increasingly, educators and policy makers are also discovering the importance of life skills variables for academic performance and achievement. Consequently, they are turning their attention to methods and practice that foster students' social and emotional development through life skills. These life skills can definitely help in bringing improvement in the educational system by equipping students with essential skills for life. Then students can easily cope with situations of frustration, pressure and anxiety. In fact, they can be self-motivated to move towards excellence. Life skills are not a substitute but complementary to any type of education or training or organizational system. To transmit the values and culture to the students, life skills can be incorporated among students at various levels of education.

2. Need and Significance of the Study

The century we are living in is marked by rapid changes in technology and tremendous competition. In this age every individual has to face conflict, competition, and stress in every walk of life. Adolescence stage is crucial stage of life. In this stage tremendous changes occur in individuals. Social and emotional changes are part of child's journey to adulthood. Education is the only means to empower children and adults alike to become active participants in the transformation of the society. It helps in the enrichment and progress of society by equipping children with spiritual, moral and material knowledge. But in this age of cut throat competition, there is so much emphasis on preparing school children to be competitive in the academic world. Children are pressurized by schools as well as family to excel in the academics. The pressure leads to Academic anxiety. This is reason why more and more children seem to be succumbing to anxiety disorders. Such children with high academic anxiety grow up into adults with poor coping skills. This explains why today's youth fail to cope with the many challenges and pressures that they face. Here comes the significance of life skills education.

Life-skills Education and its influence on the lives of students is one of the most concerned areas of education today. CBSE has included Life Skills as one of the assessment areas in its new CCE system also. This area of Life Skill is becoming very popular in the field of social, psychological and educational researches also. Ample

evidence exists regarding the importance of adequate Life Skill development for a variety of outcomes in life. Many studies are in vogue on the inclusion of Life Skills in education system and regarding their teaching methodology, like to make them part of moral education, EVS at primary level and social studies at higher. That is all theoretical in nature.

Life skills have significant effect on academic anxiety. Students having better life skills have reduced levels of academic anxiety, they can adjust in a better way and their self-confidence will also be higher.

The Younger generation can easily bring about changes in the society with their enthusiasm and zeal. The timely development of these essential life skills may help such students to reduce their academic anxiety, score well and become competent individuals of the society. These skills help in leading a normal and satisfied life with very successful social outcomes. In fact, these are the lifelong blessings for such students in spite of their low academic achievement. It was in this background that the present study has been planned. No more studies have been conducted by taking these two variables for higher secondary school students. Keeping this in mind, the investigator has selected the higher secondary school students to know how well these students understand their life skills, and academic anxiety. All these factors provided enthusiasm to investigator to take up the topic for this study.

The present study is a new venture to investigate the level of life skills and the level of academic anxiety among students at higher secondary level. Hence the study is significant.

3. Statement of the Problem

The prevailing education system has fuelled academic anxiety among the students when they are transferred from secondary level to higher secondary level. This has led to many personality disorders among them. They are not able to meet the real challenges of the world that are beyond their academic life. Such students sorely lack the life skills that are essential for even day -to -day existence. The present study revolves around the problem of finding out the relationship between life skills and academic anxiety of higher secondary school students. Hence the present study is titled as **“Relationship between Life Skills and Academic Anxiety of Higher Secondary School Students”**.

4. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the investigation are as follows;-

1. To find out the level of life skills of higher secondary school students.
2. To find out whether there is any significant difference between boys and girls of higher secondary school students in their life skills.
3. To find out whether there is any significant difference between science and commerce students in higher secondary school in their life skills.
4. To find out the level of academic anxiety of higher secondary school students.
5. To find out whether there is any significant difference between boys and girls of higher secondary school students in their academic anxiety.
6. To find out whether there is any significant difference between science and commerce students in higher secondary school in their academic anxiety.
7. To find out whether there is any significant relationship between life skills and academic anxiety of higher secondary school students.

5. Hypotheses

The study has been designed to test the following hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the life skills of boys and girls of higher secondary school students.
2. There is no significant difference in the life skills of science and commerce higher secondary students.
3. There is no significant difference in the academic anxiety of boys and girls of higher secondary school students.
4. There is no significant difference in the academic anxiety of science and commerce higher secondary students.
5. There is significant correlation between life skills and academic anxiety of higher secondary school students.

6. Methodology in Brief

The normative survey method was adopted for conducting the present study. It was designed to obtain pertinent and information concerning the current status phenomena. The sample was selected using stratified sampling technique. The sample consisted of 300 secondary school students studying in Plus Two Science and Commerce subject, with sub sample consisting of boys and girls. The variables used for the present study were Life Skills and Academic Anxiety. The tools used were Life Skills Assessment Scale, Academic Anxiety Scale & Personal Information Schedule

7. Statistical Analysis

The statistical techniques used for the analysis were t test and Karl Pearson's product moment correlation (r).

7.1 Analysis of the Level of Life Skills Scores in Testing Normal Distribution

The sample selected for the present study consisted of 300 higher secondary school students. For analyzing, the level of life skills of the higher secondary school students was computed using descriptive statistics and the results were given in Table 1

TABLE 1. Statistical indices of level of life skills among higher secondary school students- Whole sample for the variable level of life skills

| Statistical Indices | Mean | Median | Mode | Standard Deviation | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|------------------------------|-------|--------|------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Level of Life Skills (N=300) | 73.51 | 74 | 77 | 9.29 | -0.17 | 0.16 |

The above table shows that the mean and median of level of life skills scores are 73.51 and 74 with a standard deviation of 9.29. The value of skewness was found to be -0.17. According to Garrett (2007), such slight negative skewness shows how closely the distribution approaches normal form. This indicated that the distribution of scores of level of life skills approached normality.

7.2 Analysis of the Level of Academic Anxiety Scores for Testing Normal Distribution

The sample selected for the present study consisted of 300 (N = 300) higher secondary school students. For analyzing the academic anxiety of the higher secondary school students were computed using descriptive statics and the results were given in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Statistical indices of Level of Academic Anxiety among higher secondary school students - Whole sample for the variable Academic Anxiety

| Statistical Indices | Mean | Median | Mode | Standard Deviation | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|------------------------------|--------|--------|------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Level of Life Skills (N=300) | 109.04 | 106 | 122 | 12.17 | 0.003 | -0.89 |

The above table shows that the mean and median of academic anxiety scores are 109.04 and 106 with a standard deviation of 12.17. The value of skewness was found to be 0.003. According to Garrett (2007), such slight positive skewness shows how closely the distribution approaches normal form. This indicated that the distribution of scores of level of academic anxiety approached normality.

7.3 Comparison of Life Skills of Boys and Girls among Higher Secondary School Students

In this section of analysis the investigator had an attempt to find out is there any difference in the life skills of boys and girls among higher secondary school students. For the purpose the investigator formulated a null hypothesis as, *‘There is no significant difference in the life skills of boys and girls of higher secondary school students’*. The present study consisted of 154 girls and 146 boys. The obtained data were computed and analyzed using test of significance. The mean value obtained for girls was 73.48 and that of the boys was 73.31, the corresponding standard deviation for boys and girls were 9.27 and 9.52 respectively. Details of data and results are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Test of significance of life skills scores of boys and girls among higher secondary school students

| Gender | N | M | SD | t | Level of Significance |
|--------|-----|-------|------|-------|-----------------------|
| Girls | 154 | 73.48 | 9.27 | 0.156 | Not significant* |
| Boys | 146 | 73.31 | 9.52 | | |

* The t value was statistically not significant.

Table 3 indicates that the obtained t value was 0.156 which was lower than the table value at 0.05 levels of significance. It revealed that that the obtained t value was statistically not significant. The analysis also revealed that girls and boys showed a similar performance in their life skill test and there is no significant difference in the life skills of boys and girls among higher secondary school students. Graphical representation of the life skills scores among higher secondary level students given in figure 1

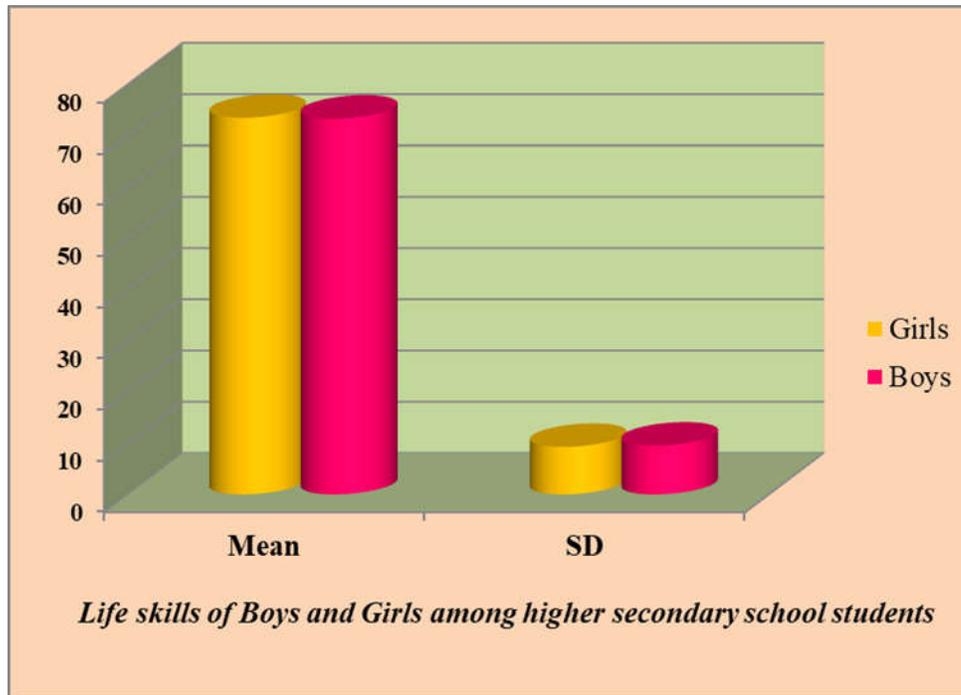


Figure 1. Life Skills among Higher Secondary School students based on gender

7.4 Comparison of Life Skills of Science and Commerce Higher Secondary School Students

In this section of analysis the investigator had an attempt to find out is there any difference in the life skills of science and commerce higher secondary school students. For the purpose the investigator formulated a null hypothesis as, *'There is no significant difference in the life skills of science and commerce higher secondary school students'*. The present study consisted of 154 commerce students and 146 science students. The obtained data were computed and analysed using test of significance. The mean value obtained for commerce students was 73.85 and that of the science students was 73.16, the corresponding standard deviation for commerce students was 8.62 and science students was 9.97 respectively. Details of data and results are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Test of significance of life skills scores of science and commerce higher secondary school students

| Subjects | N | M | SD | t | Level of Significance |
|----------|-----|-------|------|------|-----------------------|
| Commerce | 154 | 73.85 | 8.62 | 0.64 | Not significant* |
| Science | 146 | 73.16 | 9.97 | | |

* The t value was statistically not significant.

Table 4, indicates that the obtained t value was 0.64 which was lower than the table value at 0.05 levels of significance. It revealed that that the obtained t value was statistically not significant. The analysis also revealed that science and commerce students do not differ in their life skills test and there is no significant difference in the life skills of science and commerce higher secondary school students. Graphical representation of the scores of life skills of science and commerce secondary level students given in figure 2

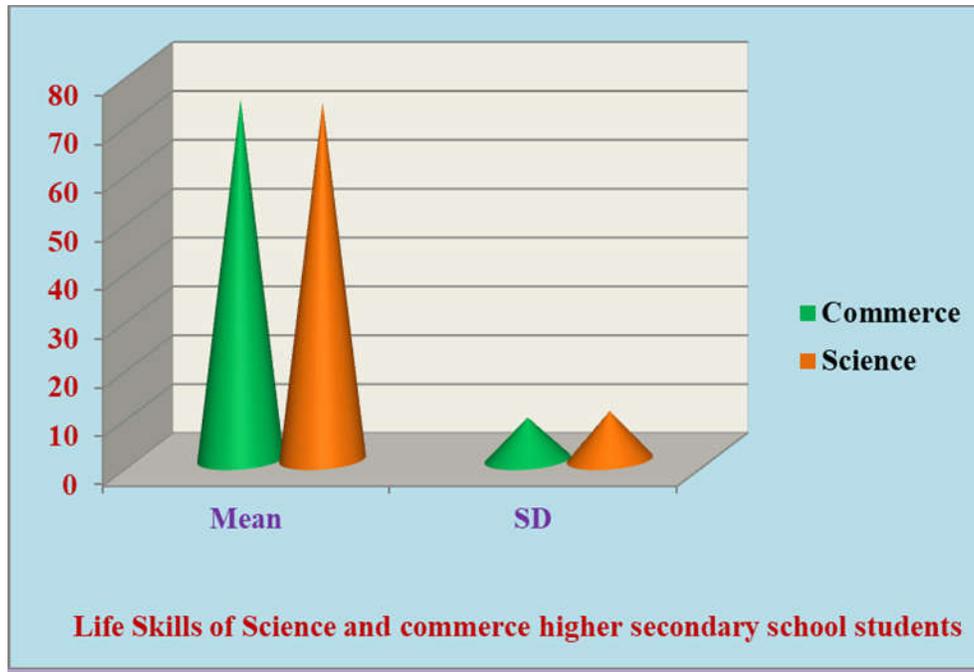


Figure 2. Life Skills of Science and Commerce higher secondary school students.

7.5 Comparison of Academic Anxiety of Boys and Girls Among Higher Secondary School Students

In this section of analysis the investigator had an attempt to find out is there any difference in the academic anxiety of boys and girls among higher secondary school students. For the purpose the investigator formulated a null hypothesis as, *‘There is no significant difference in the academic anxiety of boys and girls of higher secondary school students’*. The present study consisted of 154 girls and 146 boys. The obtained data were computed and analysed using test of significance. The mean value obtained for girls was 109.077 and that of the boys was 109.07, the corresponding standard deviation for boys and girls were 11.94 and 12.44 respectively. Details of data and results are presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5. Test of significance of Academic Anxiety scores of boys and girls among higher secondary school students

| Gender | N | M | SD | t | Level of Significance |
|--------|-----|---------|-------|-------|-----------------------|
| Girls | 154 | 109.077 | 11.94 | 0.055 | Not significant* |
| Boys | 146 | 109.07 | 12.44 | | |

* The t value was statistically not significant.

Table 5 shows that the obtained t value was 0.055 which was lower than the table value at 0.05 levels of significance. It revealed that that the obtained t value was statistically not significant. The analysis also revealed that girls and boys showed a similar performance in their academic anxiety test and there is no significant difference in the academic anxiety of boys and girls among higher secondary school students. Graphical representation of the scores of academic anxiety among higher secondary level students based on gender is given in the figure 3.

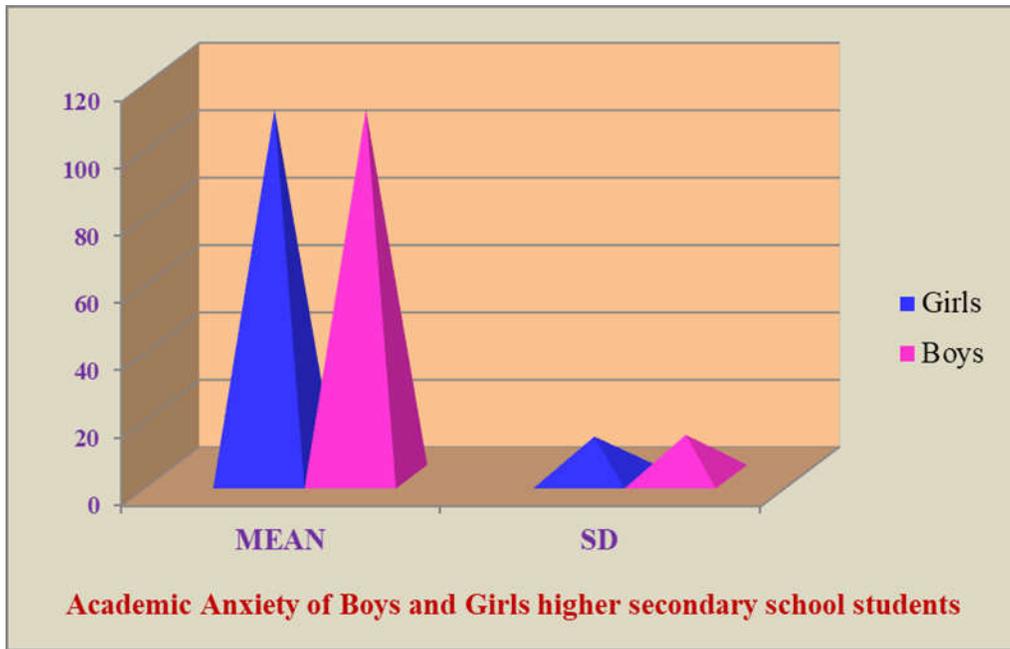


Figure 3. Academic Anxiety among higher secondary school students based on gender.

7.6 Comparison of Academic Anxiety of Science and Commerce Higher Secondary School Students

In this section of analysis the investigator had an attempt to find out is there any difference in the academic anxiety of science and commerce higher secondary school students. For the purpose the investigator formulated a null hypothesis as, *‘There is no significant difference in the academic anxiety of science and commerce higher secondary school students’*. The present study consisted of 154 commerce students and 146 science students. The obtained data were computed and analyzed using test of significance. The mean value obtained for commerce students was 108.96 and that of the science students was 109.12, the corresponding standard deviation for commerce students was 12.09 and science students was 12.29 respectively. Details of data and results are presented in Table 6

TABLE 6. Test of significance of Academic Anxiety scores of Science and Commerce higher secondary school students

| Subjects | N | M | SD | t | Level of Significance |
|----------|-----|--------|-------|-------|-----------------------|
| Commerce | 154 | 108.96 | 12.09 | 0.114 | Not significant* |
| Science | 146 | 109.12 | 12.29 | | |

* The t value was statistically not significant.

Table 6 indicates that the obtained t value was 0.114 which was lower than the table value at 0.05 levels of significance. It revealed that that the obtained t value was statistically not significant. The analysis also revealed that science and commerce students do not differ in their academic anxiety test and there is no significant difference in the academic anxiety of science and commerce higher secondary school students. Graphical representation of the scores of academic anxiety of science and commerce secondary level students given in figure 4

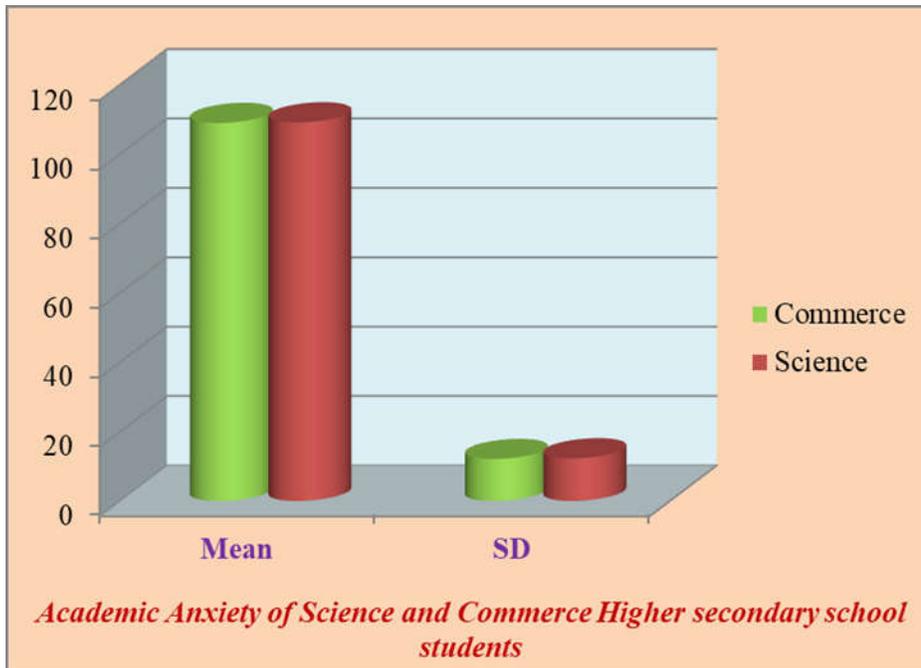


Figure 4. Academic Anxiety of science and commerce higher secondary school students.

7.7 Relationship between Life Skills and Academic Anxiety of Higher Secondary School Students

In this part, correlation analysis was conducted to find out the relationship between variables Life Skills and Academic Anxiety of higher secondary school students taken for the study.

Table 7. Product Moment correlation of Life Skills and Academic Anxiety of Higher Secondary School students

| Variables | Correlation (r) N=300 | 'r' Value set for Significance | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| | | df/298, at 0.05 levels | df/298, at 0.01levels |
| Life Skills & Academic Anxiety | -0.444 | ± 0.113 | ± 0.148 |

Table 7 indicates that the co-efficient of correlation obtained between Life Skills and Academic Anxiety was **-0.444** which was negatively correlated. It means that the variables Life Skills and Academic Anxiety have an inverse relationship. This meant that as the variable life skill increases, the other variable academic anxiety decreases, and vice versa. It can be verbally interpreted as there is a substantial negative correlation between Life Skills and Academic Anxiety of higher secondary school students.

According to Garrett (Statistics in Psychology and Education, p.201) the computed r was **-0.444** with a sample of 300, i.e., df/298. The critical values are **-0.113** and **0.113**. Since **-0.444 < -0.113**, r is significant and the line may be used for prediction.

8. Findings of the Study

1. The arithmetic mean and median of level of life skills were 73.51 and 74 with standard deviation 9.29. The value of skewness was found to be -0.17 and the kurtosis was 0.16. This indicated that the distribution of scores of life skills was normally distributed.
2. The arithmetic mean and median of academic anxiety scores were 109.04 and 106 with standard deviation 12.17. The value of skewness was found to be 0.003 and the kurtosis was -0.89. This indicated that the scores level of academic anxiety was normally distributed.
3. There is no significant difference in the life skills of boys and girls of higher secondary school students. Girls and boys showed a similar performance in their life skills scores.(t-value=0.156 not significant at 0,05 level)
4. There is no significant difference in the life skills of science and commerce higher secondary school students.(t-value=0.64 not significant at 0.05 level)
5. There is no significant difference in the academic anxiety of boys and girls of higher secondary school students.(t-value=0.055 not significant at 0.05 level)
6. There is no significant difference in the academic anxiety of science and commerce higher secondary school students.(t= 0.114 not significant)
7. The co-efficient of correlation between obtained between life skills and academic anxiety was -0,444 which was negatively and significantly correlated. This meant that as the variable life skill increases, the other variable academic anxiety decreases, and vice versa

9. Conclusion of the Study

The present study was intended to find out the relationship between life skills and academic anxiety of higher secondary school students. From the study the investigator found that there is a significant relationship between life skills and academic anxiety of higher secondary level students. The study also found out that there is no significant difference in the life skills of higher secondary school students, based on gender and subjects stream. And also there is no significant difference in academic anxiety scores of higher secondary school students, based on gender and subject stream.. Hence necessary steps should be taken for improving the life skills of students. The investigator on the basis of results suggests the need of incorporating life skills in the school education programme itself. The curriculum needs revision in this direction. Teachers as well as teacher educators need training for this inclusion. If opportunities are provided to children and young people to acquire life skills, they can confidently manage their lives in a positive manner. They will become valuable resources to their friends, family and community and this may in turn lead to the development of the nation.

Thus, there is a need of integrating life skills in the curriculum of schools as well as colleges and more emphasis should be given to the higher secondary school students. The study shows that developments of life skills in the students have reduced the academic anxiety. High level of life skill helps students in becoming good citizens and productive workers. It helps in reducing the antisocial activities and suicidal attempts. Life skills reduce the stress and Academic Anxiety, help in controlling their emotions and making them take right decisions in life. Hence, the educators and planners have an important responsibility to give proper direction to life skill education. The curriculum, teaching designs and classroom environment of schools should be such that it may inculcate Life Skills and reduce Academic Anxiety of higher secondary school students.

10. Implication of the Study

Life skills is largely beneficial for academic performance of the students, so this area demands scientific exploration and which expand the level of life skills and also has great implication for the overall development of the students. The results of the study were very useful for teachers, parents, and all others who are interested and involved in the effort to make the student's passage to adulthood even smoother.

Implication for students

- The students should develop a positive attitude towards oneself which in turn help them to become successful in their academic activities.
- Students should have goal perception so as to cope with the challenging situations that they come across the life.
- The students should develop positive attitudes towards their subjects which will in turn help them accomplish their goals fruitfully.

Implications for parents

- Parent should aware the interest aptitude, attitude, and abilities of their children.
- Parents should be aware of their child's innate potentialities.
- Parents should try to create a free atmosphere at home.

Implications for teachers

- Teacher should guide the students to choose the right path, which would help them gain educational objectives easily.
- Teachers should build a harmonious relationship with students.
- Teachers should arrange co-curricular activities which would foster their abilities and talents.

11. Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

The researcher had made all possible efforts to make the study free from limitations. However there were certain limitations which were unavoidable and are presented below with suggestions for further research.

- The present study was conducted on higher secondary school students. Further the studies can be conducted on secondary school students, primary school students and college students.
- The sample selected for the study was 300 students. Larger sample would have made the study more objective.
- The sample for the study was selected from the schools of Kollam district only. A more intensive study on the topic using wider sample selected from other districts would have produced better result for generalization.
- In the present study the variables used were life skills and academic anxiety in higher secondary students. Similar studies may be undertaken by using other variables and in other areas of academic field.
- Life skills intervention programmes can be introduced for improvement of life skills of higher secondary school students.

It is hoped that the future researchers who are interested in this area may draw their attention to the limitation of the present investigation and suggestion give for further research in this area.

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