

A STUDY ON AWARENESS OF LIFE SKILLS AMONG POST GRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract:

Life skills are the abilities enabling an individual for an adaptive behaviour to fulfil the needs and demands of life so that they face the challenges effectively in life. Life skills inculcate healthy, positive and productive progress of an individual for and they establish moral and ethical maturity and enhance the psycho-social skills. Life skills have become the salt and pepper of all individuals related to all aspects of life. Within education, the impact of life skills has become the essence of teaching and learning process. The present study aims on assessing the life skills awareness among post graduates with respect to some of the demographic variables. In the present descriptive and quantitative study, total 100 students were selected in which 50 male students (25 Arts and 25 Science) and 50 female students (25 Arts and 25 Science) were identified from various departments of Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod. Normative survey research method was used for the study. Tool in questionnaire form on life skills awareness for 100 post graduates comprised of 50 questions were prepared focussing on five dimensions of life skills i.e. problem solving, decision making, empathy, effective communication and coping with stress, trauma and loss. The tool was standardised by item analysis in which 33 questions were retained from the preliminary draft of 50 items for data collection. The present study revealed that there is no significant difference in life skills awareness of post graduates with respect to gender, age, family type, subjects or streams, and marital status. The applications of life skills in education will lend automatically a student-centred school environment in the 21st century. The present paper shows the role and impact of life skills in transforming teaching and learning pedagogy by seeking for the exploration in the awareness of life skills among post graduate students for the effectiveness in teaching learning process.

Key Words: Life skills, problem solving, decision making, effective communication, empathy, coping with stress, trauma and loss

Introduction

Education is the process of enlightening students and empowering them to achieve a better and good quality of life. The field of education is expanding day by day due to globalisation and hence it is essential to incorporate life skills in the teaching learning process for the sustainable development of students and teachers. Regardless of cultural diversity or socio-economic and political structures of democratic India, all people share well-defined and common goals. Remembering about the pace of an individual with the changing nation, teachers are required to have recent knowledge on life skills. Educating youth with life skills will enhance positive

choices of life by uncovering their unknown talents and interests. Experience of life skills inbuilt from schools or college will always influence and support an individual for his or her betterment from the beginning to the end of life. World Health Organisation (WHO; 1997) has defined life skills as the adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. The Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO; 2001) has defined life skills as social, cognitive, emotional and interpersonal skills.

Core dimensions of life skills used in the study

- 1. Problem solving:** The problem solving life skills allows an individual to solve the problems efficiently and effectively. Students can resolve conflict and they can even lead into the settlement of any kind of issues. The problem solving skills enable the students to overcome difficult situations in their daily life. Power of critical thinking and creative thinking increases among students due to problem solving skills.
- 2. Decision making:** Decision making skills enables an individual to choose the best alternative by weighing the pros and cons from various alternatives. Decision making skills enable a person to become confident, independent, affirmative and responsible to meet the needs and demands of life. Constructive and positive decisions will be taken for the smooth functioning of any activities taken up in life. Only after proper assessment and analysing different options and working on the consequences students will take the right decisions for their and other's betterment.
- 3. Effective Communication:** effective communication skills is the idea of sharing knowledge, feelings, facts, emotions, thoughts and beliefs through verbal and nonverbal forms. Effective communication skills enable a person to express his views, desires, values etc. with confidence. Good rapport and proper relationship can be maintained through effective communication skills. Social relations through active interactions can be established via effective communication skills. Leadership qualities can be inculcated among learners for the overall personality development through effective communication skills.
- 4. Empathy:** Empathy life skills are the capacity and ability to accept, assist, care and understand other's problems or situations, circumstances that they face in their life. Empathy is the ability of understanding and identifying the emotions, goals, desires and motivations of another person resulting into improving prosocial behaviour. Empathy allows a person to develop listening, observing and understanding skills and providing mental and emotional support. Empathy is to think mentally and accept the opinions other people impartially with complete justification.
- 5. Coping with stress, trauma and loss:** Coping with stress, trauma and loss will make a person to conquer the stress, trauma and loss in his and other's life. To deal efficiently with the tensions, frustrations or anxiety caused due to stress and trauma well in advance before the adverse effect of it in an individual's life. To control the emotions and balance the cognitive level to relax before the situation is worse. This skill helps to maintain balance between the positive and negative stress and how to deal with it through the most appropriate solutions. Coping with stress, trauma and loss life skills permits an individual to find out the source and effect of stress and how to overcome them.

Review of related literature

Haas et al., (2015) has examined the effects of age, gender and 4- H involvement on the development of life skills among youth of age group 8 to 18 for 1 year. Regression analysis had shown significant influence of gender, age and 4- H involvement on the development of life skills. Results revealed that level of competencies of females was more than the males at the beginning of the programme that changed during the year suggesting changes in designs of the programme for engaging, retaining, and affecting males in better way in life skills development.

Bhuvaneshwari et al., (2017) has studied the assessment of life skills among 40 nursing students (B. Sc., 1st year) from nursing colleges of Tamil Nadu. A cross sectional descriptive survey design by using the standardised life skills assessment scale was used to reveal the life skills score. Majority (75 percent) of them were having average level of life skills and others were having low scores in life skills. The result was found to be there is no association between life skills scores and socio- demographic variables of nursing students.

Chakra (2016) has conducted a study to find the influence of personal variables on core affective life skills among 544 adolescents in which 292 girls and 252 boys were selected. Life skills assessment scale developed by experts were used to assess the level of life skills and tool in the questionnaire form were used and result has shown that birth order, income of family has influenced significantly the interpersonal relationship dimension of life skills. Family type, sibling's number and gender have no significant influence on core affective life skills.

Hohendroff (2013) aimed at investigation on the relationship between social skills, socio-demographic characteristics and psychopathology among 50 adolescents (30 girls and 20 boys between 12 and 17 years of age group from either a private/public school in Brazil. Tools in the questionnaire form for sociodemographic factors, inventory on social skills and self report questionnaire for the assessment of psychopathology were constructed. Results revealed that there is no difference in frequency of social skills and indication of psychopathology with respect to gender, age and school type.

Haji et al., (2011) investigated the life skills training effectiveness on quality of life, happiness and regulation of emotions among 26 students of Iran. Quasi-experimental study with pre-test and post-test and control group design were set for the study. Tool in questionnaire form was used to test both the experimental and control group. Analysis of data was done by using ANCOVA and MANCOVA. Result had shown that there was significant difference in happiness, regulation of emotions and quality of life with respect to social relationship, psychological health and physical situations but there was no significant difference with respect to physical health.

Impact of life skills as the key to success for post graduate students

Today's youngsters like to pursue professional education more and more to a higher level, but we find that they are not sufficiently prepared to face the challenges of the outside world. This is because the life skills that is relevant for growth in the modern globalised world is not taught in the traditional system of education. Therefore, to overcome the demerits we should focus on the life skills training for post graduate students. Honesty, assertiveness, motivation, tolerance, self-confidence, self-efficacy, self- awareness, good character, competency, flexibility, responsibility, open mindedness, dignity, self-esteem, interpersonal awareness,

sociability, courage, commitment, determination, good interpersonal relations, resiliency, sensibility, adaptability, etc. can be developed among post graduates through the teaching and practising of life skills. Though they are highly qualified they lack in job efficiency as they are weak in communication, building up good and strong interpersonal relations, problem solving, empathy, decision making and coping with stress, trauma and loss etc. There is a need to develop awareness for the necessity of training of life skills to guide the post graduates to manage transition from college or university to the working sectors so that they become active and healthy citizens of the country. So, it is essential to add life skills to the formal college curriculum or include it in after college activities or in career guidance programmes. Life skills training will surely improve economic outcomes for post graduates through the enhancement in earning potential. Improvement in learning outcomes and strengthening the abilities of post graduates show positive results through life skills education programmes. Life skills will enhance work readiness and work satisfaction in student's life or in employer's life. Life skills training programmes will change the attitude and behaviour of youngsters personally and socially so that they tackle teen pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse, peer conflict and violence. Information about life skills imparted to youth should be specific, interesting, simple and engaging. Practicing the life skills will make the students to face the real and daily life situations safely and comfortably.

Need and Significance of the study

Students play a crucial role in the preparation of communities or societies to explore innovative horizons and to gain higher progress level and development and this is possible to the fullest extent only if they are well equipped with life skills. And to be well equipped with life skills first one needs to be aware of life skills and its significance in one's personal, social and professional life. The collaboration of life skills with the teaching skills or techniques will surely find a solution for the development of desired behaviour, attitudes, knowledge, values and skills of the students. The awareness of life skills will reduce bullying, violence, crime, antisocial behaviour, sexual abuse, alcoholic consumption, drug abuse, smoking, premarital pregnancy, peer conflicts, suicidal attempts, stress, trauma etc. and allow students to face the challenges and meet the demands in their life. There is a necessity of awareness of life skills to improve the quality of life. Life skills awareness will enhance the ability and positive attitude to search for and acquire more knowledge on life skills. Self-reflection will help the students to transit their knowledge from the classroom to the real world. The present paper is a step made in this regard.

Objectives

1. To study the significant mean difference in the level of life skills awareness of post graduates with respect to gender.
2. To study the significant mean difference in life skills awareness of post graduates with respect to age.
3. To study the significant mean difference in the level of awareness of life skills of post graduates with respect to family type.
4. To study the significant difference in the level of awareness of life skills of post graduates with respect to subjects/streams.
5. To study the significant difference in the level of life skills awareness of post graduates with respect to marital status.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the level of life skills awareness between male and female post graduates.
2. There is no significant difference in the level of life skills awareness of post graduates below 25 years, 25 years and above 25 years.
3. There is no significant difference in the level of awareness of life skills among post graduate students belonging to nuclear and joint family.
4. There is no significant difference in the level of life skills awareness of post graduate students belonging to arts and science streams.
5. There is no significant difference in the level of life skills awareness among married and unmarried post graduates.

Methodology & Procedure

Normative survey research method is used in this study. The study is descriptive and quantitative. The present study is conducted on a sample of 100 post graduate students from Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod. Stratified random sampling method was adopted by the investigator.

Sample

Out of 100 students, 50 male students (25 Arts and 25 Science) and 50 female students (25 Arts and 25 Science) were identified from the different departments of Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod.

Tools

Life skills awareness tools were constructed self-administered and standardized by the investigator. Questionnaire on life skills awareness for post graduates was prepared focussing on five life skills i.e. problem solving, decision making, empathy, effective communication and coping with stress, trauma and loss. The tool was standardised by item analysis in which 33 questions were retained from the preliminary draft of 50 items for data collection.

Statistical techniques

Mean, Standard deviation and t-test are the statistical techniques used in this study.

Results and Interpretations

Table 1: Mean difference in life skills awareness among Post graduates with respect to gender

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	t	Remarks
Male	50	15.54	5.39	0.76	0.44	Not significant at 0.05 level
Female	50	15.04	6.03	0.85		

The t-value testing the significance of mean difference in life skills awareness of male and female post graduates came out to be 0.44 which is not significant at 0.05 level. This shows that there is no significant mean difference in life skills among post graduates with respect to gender.

Table 2: Mean difference in life skills awareness among post graduates with respect to age

Age	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	t	Remarks
Below 25 years	80	15.00	5.70	0.64	1.02	Not significant at 0.05 level
25 years and above	20	16.45	5.65	1.26		

The t-value testing the significance of mean difference in life skills awareness of post graduates below 25 years, 25 years and above 25 years of age came out to be 1.02 which is not significant at 0.05 level. This shows that there is no significant mean difference in life skills awareness of post graduates with respect to age.

Table 3: Mean difference in life skills awareness among post graduates with respect to family type

Family type	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	t	Remarks
Nuclear	78	15.56	5.84	0.66	0.97	Not significant at 0.05 level
Joint	22	14.32	5.14	1.10		

The t-value testing the significance of mean difference in life skills awareness of post graduates belonging to nuclear and joint family came out to be 0.13 which is not significant at 0.05 level. This shows that there is no significant mean difference in life skills awareness among post graduates with respect to family type.

Table 4: Mean difference in life skills awareness between arts and science post graduates

Subjects/Streams	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	t	Remarks
Arts	50	16.08	5.69	0.80	1.39	Not significant at 0.05 level
Science	50	14.50	5.65	0.80		

The t-value testing the significance of mean difference in life skills of arts and science post graduates came out to be 1.39 which is not significant at 0.05 level. This shows that there is no significant mean difference in life skills awareness among post graduates with respect to arts and science streams.

Table 5: Mean difference in life skills awareness between married and unmarried post graduates

Marital Status	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	T	Remarks
Married	15	15.60	5.97	1.54	0.22	Not significant at 0.05 level
Unmarried	85	15.24	5.68	0.62		

The t-value testing the significance of mean difference in life skills awareness of married and unmarried post graduates came out to be 0.22 which is not significant at 0.05 level. This shows that there is no significant mean difference in life skills awareness of post graduates with respect to marital status.

Discussions

The present study has revealed that there is no significant difference in the level of life skills awareness of post graduate students with respect to the demographic variables. The findings go in line with the findings of Bhuvaneshwari et al., (2017), Chakra (2016), Hohendroff (2013) and Haji et al., (2011). The level of awareness of life skills is not related to the differences with respect to gender, age, family type, subjects/streams and marital status. So, the present study states that the awareness level is associated only with the individual. The demographic variables are not influencing it. So right from the young age parents and teachers can work on promoting and developing awareness on life skills among children. Parents can develop life skills among their children through daily life activities and prepare them to face the real world. Teaching kids with practical life skills will make them confident and happy while entering the nursery or pre-primary school and prepare them for their journey ahead. Planning life skills education programmes for youth that are relevant and meaningful by understanding their needs and demands will ensure sustainability of efforts.

Conclusion

Life skills based teaching learning process will help strengthen and promote the quality of the educational system. Life skills techniques in teaching and learning process as well as in socially oriented activities will create a good relationship between teachers and students. At present, most of the educational institutions are focussing on life skills for the overall development of students from primary to the higher education level. Sensitization on the relevance and importance of life skills among students will inculcate good qualities in them bringing up positive modification in behaviour, knowledge, attitudes, skills and values. Through this research paper, an attempt is made to study life skills awareness among post graduate students. Hence, more researches need to be conducted in life skills area so that we can design effective strategies for building life skills in learners to transform them into globally competent, tolerant and responsible citizens of our country.

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