

Life Skill Training for Youth Problems and Adjustment

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Present study was conducted with the purpose of investigating the role of life skills training for youth problems and adjustment. The present study is experimental type with pre- and post- test design. The statistical population of study was 126 girl students (due to availability) including 61 students in group-I (Problematic) and 65 students in group-II (Normal). Both groups were trained in life skills for about 20 sessions, one session per day for 2 hours. The training program includes various necessary and essential skills like self awareness, communication, interpersonal relationship, decision making, coping with stress and emotions. The tools used in the present research were Youth Problem Inventory and Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS), respectively. Findings showed that life skill training has a positive effect in youth problems and adjustment. The results are applicable for health and education experts.

Keywords: Life skill training, youth problems, adjustment and school students.

Youth is very important period in the life of man. This period is usually concomitant with problems as they “struggle” to fit themselves into society. The word “problem” does not necessary imply that youth is to be assumed to be a period in which stress and storms predominant: it can be a period marked by good health and high achievement. Nevertheless difficult decision and adjustment face young people in today’s society. Many youths may not be sufficiently mature to cope with such problems. They go in undesirable directions such as delinquency, drugs, vandalism and stealing etc. moreover, they compensate for their feelings by striking out against society, revolting against adult authority. These problems are invariably compounded by peer pressure where by young people are faced either consciously or unconsciously to become involved in those antisocial activities by people of their own age groups.

Studies on risk and protective factors for children and adolescents have lead mental health professionals to become interested in prevention programs. One well-studied prevention effort is life skills training. Life skills training is an effective prevention method for a range of problems with adolescents, as well as an effective intervention for adolescents experiencing a wide variety of emotional, behavioral, and physical problems.

A WHO document (1994) defines life skills as “abilities for adoptive and positive behavior that enable an individual to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”.

These skills help to develop psychosocial competence and empower young people to have control over what they do. Decision making, communicating, building self-esteem, developing relationships, dealing with conflicts, problem solving, coping with stress and emotions are set of skills which are necessary for the psychosocial wellbeing in children and adolescents.

The study of Botvin and colleges (2006) that was aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of prevention program of life skills training on students` violence and delinquency, showed that, teaching the skills, significantly reduced the violence and delinquency of students. Arya, Ranjbar, Salehi, and Roustaei (2012) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of life skills instruction on general health and social adjustment in girl students of Rezvanshahr guidance schools. Findings showed that life skill training in increasing general health, social adjustment, girl students is used effectively and efficiently. Sobhigharamaki and Rajabee (2010) have also found that life skill training affects

mental health and self-esteem of adolescents positively.

The purpose of life skill training is improving psychic and social abilities, mental health and preventing destructive behaviors. After receiving life skill training, each individual should achieve some abilities like self-awareness, self-esteem, communicating with the others, collaborating, and also the ability the dealing with emotions. Problems are evitable in human life, therefore and improving some vital skills is necessary. Roodbari, Sahdipoor and Ghale (2013) found that life skill training have a positive effect on social development, emotional and social adjustment. So, due to the importance of life skill training in students and their importance in student's personality development, present study investigates the role of life skill training in youth problems and adjustment.

Hypotheses :

There would be significant impact of life skill training on youth problems.

There would be significant impact of life skill training on adjustment of school students.

Method

A pre and post test design was adopted to assess the impact of the life skill intervention program. Life Skill Training was conducted collectively in a group of 126 subjects for 2 hours per day. This way, life skill training was given in 20 sessions (20 days).

Sample:

A random sample of 126 (girls) school students in the age range of 12 to 16 years, studying in VIII to XI standard of Hindi medium schools in Rohtak district, Haryana were selected. Out of 126 subjects, 61 were found to be problematic i.e. either having youth problems or having poor adjustment or having both the problems (i.e. Problematic; Group I). Group II (Normal) consist of 65 subjects having no problem (either of the two). In this way two groups were formed after administration of both inventories (Pre Test).

Tools:

For collecting the required data for both pre - and post test conditions following questionnaires were used.

Phase I (Pre test)	Phase II (Intervention)	Phase III (Post test)
Administration of Youth Problem Inventory and Adjustment Inventory for School Students	Administration of Life Skill Training Program on both groups [Group I (Problematic) N=61 and Group II (Normal) N=65].	Administration of Youth Problem Inventory and Adjustment Inventory for School Students on Ss (N=126) of both groups. (After 7 days)

Youth Problem Inventory (M. Verma): It consists of 80 statement divided into four areas of youth problems i.e., family problems, school problems, social problems and personal & over sensitivity problems. The reliability coefficient of the entire inventory is .80.

Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS) (Sinha and Singh): The inventory has been designed for Hindi knowing school students. It consists of 60 statements divided into three areas of adjustment: emotional, social and educational. The entire inventory's split-half reliability is .95 and test-retest reliability is .93. High score indicates poor adjustment.

Life Skill Training Program:

Life skills include psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner. The life skills are Self-awareness, Effective communication, Interpersonal relationship skills, Decision making, Coping with emotions and Coping with stress. The major techniques used in life skill training program include Brainstorming, Role-Plays, Small Group Activities, and Lectures followed by Group Discussion.

Procedure:

The present research has been conducted in three phases.

Phase I

In phase I, both the questionnaires were administered on girls' students (N=126) between

the age group of 12 to 16 years. The instructions for both the tests were given to the subjects.

Phase II

Total 126 subjects were divided into two groups containing 61 students in Group-I (Problematic) and 65 students in Group-II (Normal) (after the scoring of both the tests administered in pre-condition). 61 students in Group-I were those who were having either poor adjustment or more of youth problems. Group-II contains 65 students who were having normal adjustment or having no youth problems. Life skill training program was given to both the groups.

The life skill training program

After selecting the participants for the study, under life skill training program, activities related were administered daily for 2 hours for 20 sessions (20 days to subjects of both the groups). Each session was activity based and participatory in nature. The major techniques used to impart information were Brainstorming, Role-Plays, small Group Activities, and Lectures followed by Group Discussion. Home work assignments were also given to the subjects.

In this study, most of the students were kept highly engaged in the activity and worked together to accomplish the goal. The students in the group collaborated with each other and each student participated and attempted to do assigned tasks or roles. The students in the groups had to engage in problem solving, understand the task, make conjectures, and test their ideas. A group leader emerged from the activity, as well as several assertive students who attempted to assist in leading the group.

Administration of Life Skill Training Program

The following life skill training sessions were taken:

- **Introduction and Ice – breaking:**

First Session (Day 1): Getting to know each other and Rapport Building.

- **Exploring life skills:**

Second Session (Day 2): Described life skills and explain the necessity of life skill training to students to cope with the challenges of life and exchange ideas with group members in the form

of practical work as well as to familiarize students with classroom rules.

Inculcating Values:

Third Session (Day 3): Recognized the values and their importance in life. Explain that the values can be changed and we can replace the positive and healthy values with unhealthy and negative values.

Self awareness:

Fourth Session (Day 4): Learning about “me as a special person”.

Fifth Session (Day 5): Identification of strengths and weakness and become aware of the realistic aspects of self.

Sixth Session (Day 6): Become familiar with self control.

Seventh Session (Day 7): Understanding “my life”.

Communication Skills:

Eighth Session (Day 8): Familiarity with verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

Ninth Session (Day 9): Understanding assertive communication in the face of peer pressure.

Interpersonal relationship Skills:

Tenth Session (Day 10): Learning to value relationships with friends and family.

Eleventh Session (Day 11): Learning to appreciate others.

Twelfth Session (Day 12): Knowing about the importance of trust in a relationship.

Decision Making:

Thirteenth Session (Day 13): Learning basic steps for decision making.

Fourteenth Session (Day 14): Familiarity with making difficult decisions.

Fifteenth Session (Day 15): Understanding decision making about important life plans.

Emotions and Coping Behaviour:

Sixteenth Session (Day 16): Familiarity with recognition of the expression of different emotions.

Seventeenth Session (Day 17): Understanding how emotions affect the way we behave.

Eighteenth Session (Day 18): Familiarity with coping with emotional distress and emotion management.

Coping with stress:

Nineteenth Session (Day 19): Familiarity with identifying sources of stress.

Twentieth Session (Day 20): Familiarity with methods for coping in stressful situations.

Feedback and Verbal Reporting:

(Day 20) Taking feedback and asked questions, to know that all the students understood and followed the activities well.

Phase III

After completing 20 sessions for 20 days, feedback was taken from all the participants. Thus post test condition (after 7 days) was started and 126 subjects were administered Youth Problem Inventory and Adjustment Inventory for School Students, to know any change in their knowledge, behavior and understanding, as a result of the training program. The obtained data was manually scored and statistically analysed by using descriptive statistics.

Results

The result of the study is presented below

The table 1 presents mean scores of youth problems and adjustment in pre - & post condition of Group – I (Problematic). A significant decrease in the youth problems and adjustment was observed from pre to post condition. Results show that there was a significant difference observed between pre test and post test of family problems ($t=8.38, p<.01$), school problems ($t=5.52, p<.01$), social problems ($t=8.59, p<.01$), personal problems ($t=8.28, p<.01$), and in overall youth problems ($t=10.64, p<.01$).

Significant difference between pre and post condition in emotional adjustment ($t=10.98, p<.01$), social adjustment ($t=10.34, p<.01$), educational adjustment ($t=4.02, p<.01$), and overall adjustment ($t=9.66, p<.01$) have also been observed.

The results of the pre and post test conditions of youth problems and adjustment of Group-I (Normal) (presented in table 2) shows that there was a significant decrease in the youth problems and adjustment from pre-to post condition. Results reveal that, there is a significant difference in the pre test and post test scores of family problems ($t=7.26, p<.01$), school problems ($t=7.56, p<.01$), social problems ($t=7.09, p<.01$), personal problems ($t=8.49, p<.01$), and overall youth problems ($t=8.59, p<.01$).

The obtained findings indicate that there is a significant difference between pre and post

Table 1. Mean, SD and t value of pre and post condition of Group – I (Problematic)

Variables	Pre		Post		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Family Problems	27.56	10.82	18.44	7.26	8.38**
School Problems	11.88	5.94	7.77	5.26	5.52**
Social Problems	6.20	2.10	3.82	1.88	8.59**
Personal Problems	22.05	9.27	15.70	7.09	8.28**
Overall Youth Problems	67.77	23.17	45.74	15.30	10.64**
Emotional Adjustment	9.56	4.01	5.74	2.59	10.98**
Social Adjustment	9.05	3.82	5.05	2.08	10.34**
Educational Adjustment	8.72	4.03	7.64	2.85	4.02**
Overall Adjustment	27.33	11.17	18.26	6.74	9.66**

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

Table 2 Mean, SD and t value of pre and post condition of Group – II (Normal)

Variables	Pre		Post		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Family Problems	17.06	7.99	12.40	6.26	7.26**
School Problems	8.08	6.19	5.28	3.99	7.56**
Social Problems	3.09	1.60	2.06	1.13	7.09**
Personal Problems	14.82	6.92	10.29	5.13	8.49**
Overall Youth Problems	42.89	16.67	29.42	10.97	8.59**
Emotional Adjustment	5.22	2.19	4.40	1.68	5.68**
Social Adjustment	5.12	1.79	4.14	1.33	5.66**
Educational Adjustment	5.15	1.73	4.66	1.62	3.90**
Overall Adjustment	15.48	3.81	13.05	3.04	6.84**

*p<0.05, **- p<0.01

condition in emotional adjustment ($t=5.68$, $p<.01$), social adjustment ($t=5.66$, $p<.01$), educational adjustment ($t=3.90$, $p<.01$), and in overall adjustment ($t=6.84$, $p<.01$).

Discussion

The present study focuses on these life skills as youth survival skills in healthy conditions and, using the framework of WHO's definition of three aspects in health: physical, psychological, and social aspects, aims to understand the skills that are useful in enhancing health in daily life (health-related life skills, hereafter).

On seeing the present results, it is observed that a significant difference between pre - and post condition on youth problems has been obtained which indicates that there is an impact of life skill training on the part of youth problems among students.

Under youth problems talking about family problems which includes parental indifferences, parental strict supervision, lack of freedom, interferences, parental dominance, rejection from parents, lack of affiliation, inter-generation gap in ideology etc (as per manual), the life skills such as self-awareness, communication skill, interpersonal relationship skill, coping with emotion and stress put an impact on the family problems of participants in both the groups. Learning decision making skills and value relationships with friends and family along with knowing the importance of trust and confidence

in a relationship makes better adjustment having a flexible attitude. Mize and Ladd (1990) in their study have also reported that life skill training given to youth prevent peer rejection, which support our findings stating that family problems such as parental dominance, rejection from parents etc were decreased.

Student's school problems such as fear of school activities, fear of teachers, rejection and indifference by teachers, isolation, difficulties in school subjects etc have been decreased after life skill training program. Learning life skills raise student's self confidence which help them overcome their fear of school activities and also fear from teachers etc. Tuttle and Heicler (2006) also observed the extraordinary capability of teens to positive promotion and flexibility in their study when they added the life skills to students' curriculum.

The obtained significant difference between pre and post condition in both groups as far as social problems are concerned suggest that there is a positive role of life skill training on the part of social problems among subjects. Social problems can be interpreted as social inferiorities and social isolation (as per manual). After life skills training such problems were tremendously found to decline in students. Communication skills and interpersonal relationship skills made the subjects more social by participating in various activities and developing and maintaining good relations with family, friends and others.

Communication skills can empower an individual by decreasing negative feelings and social tension, to successively and structurally solve his problems and act positively and congenially in his relationships with other society members. Taught communication skills include skills such as self-assertion, coping with shame, the ability to say no and confront friends' pressure. Empirical findings by Botvin & Kantor (2000) are also in line with the present study who reported that communication skills reduced negative feelings.

Results revealed that in post condition, subject's personal problems have declined significantly in both groups. Personal problems can be interpreted as depression, frustration, feeling of failure and inferiorities, present and future career. Training of life skills caused improvement in individuals' general health (Errecart and Ross, 2002). Vertainen (2004) has performed such program on the girl and boy students in Finland and obtained similar results. Learning self-awareness skill is very helpful in preventing or solving personal problems. These skills such as identifying our strengths and weaknesses, can encourage us to take steps towards modifying and improving our strengths and weaknesses. When a person is conscious about his strengths and weaknesses, increasing the internal self-control, inner self-regulation and self-analysis, he is able to cope with his personal problems. Also, emotional management and stress management skills are a way to prevent or solve personal problems, including aggression, depression, frustration, ideological fears etc.

Findings show that the youth problems declined significantly in post condition of both the groups. The findings of the present research are supported by the study of Clinics (2000), which shows that learning life skills increases one's ability to deal with the problems by improving their coping styles. People who learn life skills, become more capable for solving their problems than others and are more able to respond appropriately to resolve their issues (Emami, 2010).

However, recent findings in behavioral epidemiology indicate that mental health problems, social problems, and health- risk

behaviors often co-occur as an organized pattern of adolescent risk behaviors (Greenberg, Domitrovich & Bumbarger, 1999). It focuses on increasing positive social skills with which to handle inevitable social disagreement and conflict, on the ability to generate alternative solutions to an interpersonal problem and on the ability to conceptualize the consequences of different behaviors.

Present findings also revealed a significant difference between pre and post condition on emotional adjustment in both the groups. Emotionally adjusting persons can be interpreted as emotionally stable. To be stable in emotions, to handle emotions well is an important skill that adolescents must learn, as this seems to be major cause of their involvement in high-risk behaviors. Effectiveness of Life Skill Training has been supported by various researches like Deffenbacher, Lynch, Oetting & Kemper (1996) that reported in their research that Life Skill Training teaches anger control in youth. Roodbari, Sahdipoor and Ghale (2013) also found that life skills' training has a positive effect on social development, emotional and social adjustment in high school female students.

Life Skill Training thus teaches social and emotional skills that have positive effects in multiple realms, such as decreasing aggression, decreasing suspensions and expulsions, decreasing drug use and delinquency, increasing academic test scores, and increasing positive attachments to school and families (Hawkins, Catalano & Miller, 1992). Concisely, life skills programs address and have an impact on multiple behaviors. Skills for coping with emotions through learning self-management and controlling stress (often incorporating social problem solving skills) are a critical dimension of most life skills programs. The present findings are consistent with the findings of Albertyn, Kapp and Croenewald (2004); Grant, Elliot, Giger and Bartoluci (2002); Tuttle and Heicler (2006); Pour Seydi (2010); Navidi (2008) and Hamidi (2005). Suarez (2000) reporting that the intervention composed of 'interpersonal problem-solving' and 'social skills' training programs were effective in improving emotional adjustment and social adjustment and self-image as observed by students' teacher.

On social adjustment, significant difference was found between pre and post condition. The importance of social adjustment has been seen in the behavior of adolescents in dealing with people, having control on aggressiveness and to deal with different situations has been observed in present research. The present findings showed that life skills training increase social adjustment and are also verified by the studies of Major, Cooper, Cozzarelli and Zubek (1998); Mott (1999); Gamble (2006); Short (2006); Tarmiyani (2003); Ahadi (2009); Atari and Shehni Yeylaghi (2005); Safarzadeh (2004).

As for the third type of adjustment i.e. educational adjustment, the results reveal significant difference between pre and post condition. It is known that individuals having good adjustment in context of educational are at better pace in their adjustment with curricular and extracurricular programmes. One of such study is that of Hawkins, Catalano & Miller (1992), who found that life skill training has been found to increase academic test scores.

Significant difference was also observed between pre and post condition on overall adjustment which improved significantly in post condition of both groups. Because adjustment is inevitably tied in with issues of independence, sufficiency and control and will vary from person to person influenced by their character, previous experiences and support network.

As we have seen, life skill training are effective in improving adjustment. The results of present research are consistent with findings of Albertyn, Kapp and Croenewald (2004), Barker (2002), Navidi (2008), Park, Moor, Tuner and Alder (1997), Sajedi (2009), Ahadi (2009), Atari and Shehni Yeylaghi (2005), Shohadaie (2007).

In the light of above discussion, it could be stated that life skill training can specifically address the needs of children growing up in disadvantaged environments that lack opportunities to develop these skills. The social, cognitive and emotional coping skills targeted by life skills programs are shown to be mediators of problem behaviors and there lies the success of life skill training.

There are research indications that teaching skills in this way, as part of broad-based life skills programs, is an effective approach for primary

prevention education (Errecart et al., 1991; Caplan et al., 1992).

Similarly, study of Tobler et al. (2000) also indicated that non-interactive lecture-oriented programs have minimal impact, whereas interactive programs like life skill training that enhance the development of interpersonal skills have greater impact. Life skill training includes training in refusal skills, goal setting, assertiveness, communication, and coping and therefore greater benefits were also achieved.

Recommendations

- The intervention program helped adolescents to get a better insight in mental and social growth for flexibility in his/her behaviour.
- The sessions helped in improving their self image as well as boost their confidence level. It also helped to improve their self understanding and thereby lay foundation of an integrated sense of identity.
- The life skill program was able to achieve information, knowledge gain and the required modifications/changes in attitude and behavior.
- The program helped them not only to become aware of their good qualities and thus raise their self worth and confidence but also made them alert of any wrong attitude.
- Conducting programs that include teaching communication skills, inculcating values, improved decision making, coping with emotions and stress as a component of life skills in addition to other educational materials at school, that can be effective for students due to the sensitivities of this age.

Conclusion

The life skill intervention program was an effort to reach out to the students who are underprivileged and promote psychosocial competence in an interactive and participatory learning environment. The sessions, not only provided knowledge and information base on various skills like decision making, communication, dealing with conflicts, coping

with peer pressure and emotions but also equipped the adolescents with the personal and social skills they need to translate their knowledge into behavior.

Though the intervention program was effective in raising the awareness level of the students and provide a basis for making informed decisions, translation of this knowledge into attitude and behavior would require more efforts on a regular basis.

For the youth to enter the community of responsible adults prepared for a diversity of social roles, they must possess critical thinking and problem solving skills along with effective resources and social competence. Life skills impart such skills and not only help the well-being of the youth but also contribute to a bright future of the nation.

If a small part of the school curriculum is allocated to teaching of control of negative emotions, problem solving process, decision making, establishing appropriate interpersonal relationships, the incidence of many behavioral disorders will be prevented.

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