

Life Skills Among Adolescent Girls



Social Science

KEYWORDS : Life skills, Adolescent girls, competency, family interactions.

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ABSTRACT

The present descriptive study was an attempt to find out the level of life skills among rural adolescent girls. Life skills were assessed by using self-prepared questionnaire Comprises of 50 questions in 10 dimensions of WHO Life skills. The subject has to rate each item on a 5 point scale. Scoring was done for each respondents according to the norms prescribed in the scale. 75 respondents were chosen through stratified disproportionate sampling procedure in Government Higher Secondary School, Poovalur, Tiruchirappalli District. Results indicated that majority of the respondent have low level of life skills. There is a significant relationship between family interactions and overall life skills of the adolescent girls. Based on the findings of the study it is suggested school mental health programmes should be organized. Life skills education should be organized to enhance the coping mechanism of the adolescent girl students. It is an essential tool for empowering the adolescent girl students.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a turning point in one's life, a period of increased potential but also one of greater vulnerability. One quarter of India's population are in the age group of below 19 years. Onset of puberty decreases autonomy and mobility of girls, with increasing restrictions on speech, appearance, conduct and interaction with the opposite sex. Effective social interactions are a critical factor for successful functioning in the home and school of adolescent girls. A clear understanding of roles in the context of family interactions is very much important in shaping the adolescent girls. The psychological push factors such as the inability to tackle emotional pain, conflicts, frustrations and anxieties about the future are often the driving force for high-risk behavior among adolescent girls. Further, exposures to media and mixed messages from the fast changing world have left adolescent girls with many unanswered questions. The widening gap in communication between adolescent girls and family members is remain a complications to girls' development. Adolescents are not well prepared for the overall development. Adolescent girls are the future mothers and it becomes critically important to plan for the development of the life skills during the adolescent years. Life skills Competencies provide adolescent girls an opportunity to understand them to meet their daily challenges without facing psychosocial problems. Life skills have been defined as "the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO, 2005). This study confirms the importance life skills by the adolescent girls during the developmental phase in life.

What are life skills?

Life skills include psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help individuals make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with managing their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Life skills approach develops skills in adolescents, both to build the needed competencies for human development and to adopt positive behaviors that enable them to deal effectively with the challenges of everyday life.

Various Dimensions of Life Skills

The Worldwide Organization (UNICEF, UNESCO and WHO) suggested the following ten core dimensions for Life Skills Education.

Self-awareness includes recognition of one's self, his / her character, his strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes.

Developing self-awareness can help adolescent girls to recognize when they are stressed or feel under pressure. It is often a prerequisite to effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy with others.

Empathy is an ability to imagine what life is like for another person. Empathy can help the adolescent girls to accept others, who may be very different from others. This can improve social interactions, especially for adolescent girls in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity.

Critical thinking is an ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping them to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behavior of adolescent girls such as values, peer pressure and the media.

Creative thinking is an innovative way of seeing or doing things that is characteristic of four components – fluency (generating new ideas), flexibility (shifting perspective easily), originality (conceiving of something new), and elaboration (building on other ideas). It is very essential for adolescent girls to face the challenging or critical situations.

Decision-making help the adolescent girls to deal constructively with decisions about their lives. This can have consequences for health. It can help them to actively make decisions about their actions in relation to healthy assessment of different options and effects these different decisions are likely to have.

Problem solving helps them to deal constructively with problems their lives; significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain.

Interpersonal relationship skills help the adolescent girls to relate in positive ways with the people they interact. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to their mental and social well-being, which is an important source of social support.

Effective communication helps to express themselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to their cultures and situations. This may mean being able to express opinions and desires, and also needs and fears. In addition, it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.

Coping with stress means recognizing the sources of stress in their lives, recognizing how it affect them and acting in ways that help them to control their levels of stress, by changing their environment or lifestyle and learning how to relax.

Coping with emotions means recognizing emotions within them and others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions like anger or sadness can have negative effects on their health if they do not respond appropriately.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Aim

The main aim of the study is to assess the level of life skills among adolescent girls.

Objectives

- To study the Socio -demographic characteristics of the respondents.
- To assess the level of life skills in various dimensions among adolescent girls.
- To suggest suitable measures to develop the life skills among adolescent girls.

Research Design

In the present study, the researcher has attempted to investigate the competency of life skills among the adolescent girls. The effort of the investigation is to provide a descriptive profile of the characteristics of the respondents. Further, the researcher has described various dimensions of life skills need to be used among adolescent girls. Hence, descriptive research design was used.

Universe and Sampling

The researcher has collected data from the 9th standard, 11th standard and 12th standard adolescent girls from Government Higher Secondary School, Poovalur Thiruchirapalli District, Tamilnadu. The universe of the present study includes the Higher Secondary Girl Students of Government Higher Secondary School, Poovalur Thiruchirapalli District, Tamilnadu, which consisted of 148 students. For the present study the researcher has used disproportionate stratified random sampling method in the selection of the respondents. The researcher has selected 24 respondents from each of the class or strata from 9th standard, 11th standard and 12th standard irrespective of their population size of the stratum. The total sample size of the study comprised of 74 respondents.

Tools of Data Collection

The initial data collection was done with a self-prepared Socio – demographic schedule. The schedule elicited information of the respondent’s age, education, type of family, family size, religion and income of the family. It also consisted of items pertaining to the respondents parent’s occupation, education, level of relationship with children, time spend by parents, concern of parents, relationship with siblings and psycho social support from school and relationship with teacher.

Life skills education in this study was measured by self prepared scale assessing the respondents on 10 dimensions of WHO Life skills, namely self awareness, empathy, interpersonal relationship, communication, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, coping with stress and coping with emotions. Each dimension has 5 items. The subject has to rate each item on a 5 point scale. Reliability of the scale was found to be 0.72 by using split half method.

Results and Discussions

Regarding perceived family interactions by the adolescent girls, majority (80.5 %) of the adolescent girls have cordial relation-

ship with their parents and only few (19.5 %) of them have felt that their parents are rigid. More than one-third of them stated that their fathers (41.5 %) are more concern compared to their mothers. Nearly half (48.8. %) of them felt that their parents spend enough time with them, less than half (41.5 %) of the adolescents felt that their parents did not spend enough time with them. Majority (65.9%) of the adolescent girls has cordial relationship with their siblings.

With regard to opinion about the school atmosphere and peer relations, Majority (84.5%) of them are satisfied with school atmosphere. Majority (78.0%) of the respondents said that they have good relationship with teacher. Majority (89.0%) of them have accepted that they have friends. Majority (65.9%) of them are comfortable with friends to share their personal problems. Vast majority (92.6%) the respondents suggested that school counselling service would be helpful to them.

Table 01
Distribution of the Respondents by various Dimensions of Life Skills

S.N	Particulars	Low	High
01.	Self-Awareness	63	36
02.	Empathy	62	37
03.	Interpersonal Relationship	58	42
04.	Communication	56	44
05.	Critical thinking	66	34
06.	Creative thinking	58	42
07.	Decision making	53	47
08	Problem solving	51	49
09	Coping with stress	56	44
10	Coping with emotions	52	48
11	Over all	51	49

From the table it is inferred that the various dimensions of the Life Skills of the respondents. Majority (63 %) of the respondent have poor in self-awareness. Similarly, Ahuja and Tewari were reported that self awareness among adolescents were found to be low. Another study also indicates that adolescents greatly lack correct information related to their physiological, psychological and sexual changes especially awareness regarding emotional /social changes is very less (Jain, Kumar & Khanna, 2013). Regarding the competency in understanding others emotions (empathy) is low among the majority (62 %) of the adolescent girls. This is because, adolescents are in the stage of emotional turmoil and more distress at this point no one can predict the other’s emotions.

With regard to interpersonal relationship of the respondent it is seen that more than half (58 %) of the respondents have low level on their interpersonal relationship. Emotional imbalance is one of the major issue for poor interpersonal relationship. Darley et al., (1988) indicates that adolescence period can be a time of self-doubt, loneliness, fear of failure and conflict with people all around. More than half (56%) of the respondents do not have effective communication skill because, generally adolescent years in girls represent a very challenging time as relationship with parents, peers and others become more complex. Majority (66 %) of the respondents are poor in critical thinking. When it comes to the level of creativity among adolescent girls it was found that more than half (58 %) of the respondents have low level of creativity. One study revealed that there is a relationship between the creativity and vocational interest of the adolescents (Nandwana & Asawa ,2007).

More than half (53 %) of the respondent are poor in decision-making. More than half (56 %) of the respondent are not able to tackle their problems. When it comes to the Coping of stress more than half (51 %) of the respondents have low scores. More than half (56 %) of the respondents have low level of coping

skills with emotions. One research study also revealed that majority of the adolescents have low level of coping in confrontation, distancing, escape, avoidance, painful problem solving and positive appraisal (Dubat, Punia & Goyal , 2007)

With regard to over all Life skills by the adolescent girls, more than half (51 %) of them have low level of life skills which can induce psycho social problems in them.

Table 02
Relationship between Family Interactions and Life Skills of Adolescent Girls

N	R	Level of significance	Significant
74	0.85	At 0.05 to 0.01	significant

There is a significant relationship between the family interactions and life skills of adolescent girls. It was supported by the study made by Sharma (2003) stated that life skills is more influenced by the mothers' education and family support.

Other Major Findings

Findings related to economic variables

Majority (64 %) of the respondents' family income were up to Rs.5000.

Majority (65.9%) of the respondents' fathers were farmers. Only (7.1%), respondents fathers were weavers.

Majority (57.9%) of the respondents' mothers engaged in agricultural activities.

Findings related to Sociological variables

A significant (56.8%) percent of the respondents are living in small family.

Regarding the religion of the respondents, majority (87.8%) of the respondents are Hindu.

Majority (78 %) of the respondents are living in nuclear family type.

Majority of the mothers (62 %) and fathers (68 %) have completed primary level education.

SUGGESTIONS

This study highlighted the importance of Life skills education for adolescent girls. In India, Life skills educational programs are not comprehensive; it is in an infancy stage. Life Skills Education for adolescent girls to be essential components of healthy development and also it prevent high-risk sexual behaviors, teach anger management, improve academic performance and promote positive social adjustment. Efforts should be taken to coordinate with other services to inculcate the knowledge of life skills to school students and adolescents in the community. Parents need to be better informed about the essentials of Life skills and train them and educate them its role on adolescents. School counselling services and mental health programmes need to be organized to ensure continuity of care for the adolescents during the developmental transitions. It is said that the home is Child's first school and the school is a child's second home. A child spends the best part of the day at school. So efforts should be taken to connect schools with communities to enrich Life skills education among adolescent girls and ensure effective competency of life skills for adolescent girls.

CONCLUSION

Today hi-tech world are overburdened to adolescent girls and increased risky life to them in various forms such as, mixed message, competitive examinations, violent behavior, suicidal ten-

dencies etc. Guiding adolescent girls to practice life skills can built habits of positive thinking and help them tackle the conflict situations instead of resorting to violent tendencies.

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