

Impact of life skills training program on general well-being of high school students

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ABSTRACT

The study intended to investigate the impact of life skills training on general well-being and to study the influences of demographic variables (gender and area of the school) on the effectiveness of life skills training program in increasing general well-being. In order to accomplish the aims of the present work, an intervention study has been carried with an experimental and control group. Students were screened on life skills using life skills scale and those who found to have lower scores selected for the study. Two hundred students were selected and randomly divided into an experimental and control group; however, the equal number of urban, and rural children were included maintaining the equal number of boys and girls. Hence, a total of 50 boys and 50 girls for experimental group (N=100) and 50 boys and 50 girls for control group (N=100) took part in the final study. PGI general well-being questionnaire administered at the beginning and end of the training program. The data were subjected to descriptive statistics, paired-samples t-test, and two-way analysis of covariance. The results of this study suggest that general well-being scores increased in the post-test condition after the successful completion of life skills training program among high school students. The results also suggest gender and area differences in acquiring life skills, which is females, were benefited more than male students.

Keywords: *Life skills, Well-being, Adolescents, Training, Students*

Despite being the second-largest populated country in the world, India has the world's highest number of youth population, with 356 million under the age of 10-24 years old (Gupta, 2014). India is blessed with highest youth population, and proper training in various psychological skills equips the youth to be highly effective. Young people are the asset of any nation for fostering economic and cultural and all over development. The proper utilization of these young minds can make huge difference in various developmental aspects of the country. Youth active participation in the community development and positive contribution indeed lead us to be the great country in near future. Young people are influenced by their parents initially and good number of years they spend in educational system that will have maximum influence for overall development.

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The present education system in India mainly focused on job oriented rather than the promotion of various essential life skills of an individual. Since the search for jobs is the biggest motivator in seeking education, these young people were in great turmoil in various aspects of life such as attaining education, career, and personal goals. These stressors make young people more vulnerable in psychological, social and personal conflicts. Thus, education should teach essential life skills along with job-finding skills. Absence of various life skills may lead to extreme stress, depression and suicidal tendencies among youth population. That is what we see today in the society, where considerable numbers of youth are not in a position to take care of themselves particularly in various domains such as emotional, psychological and tend to get into troubles and turmoil.

For instance, parental expectations and corporate college's extreme pressure to get cent marks in Intermediate examinations led at least ten students to commit suicides after announcing Intermediate results-2018 in both the Telugu states (The Hans India Daily News Paper, 14/04/2018). This is the scenario at most of the places in India when the results are out, and there would even be news of suicides committed by failed students or students who did not achieve as expected. These unwanted risky decisions by young people were not limited to just failing in exams or not attaining their expected marks in exams, but also when intimate relationships were broken, and financial problems arise in the families. Whatever the perceived reasons might be, ending one's own life should not be the destination; this is one extreme behavior. There are studies to show that youth become depressed, sad and melancholic and even end up addicted to substances spoiling the beautiful lives. Research studies on adolescents shown that the depression is most common psychiatric disorder in school going children (Nair, Paul & John, 2004; Lewinson et al., 1993) that the depression can lead to suicide (Sanjeev et al., 2004). By 2020 the depression becomes like a common cold of mental illness causing death and disability. Therefore, it is essential to equip the youth of the country if they have to become productive and beneficial to society.

In the current scenario, youth is required to develop social skills and specific life skills, which are essential in addressing new challenges and problems. Psychosocial competence helps adolescents to manage and improve their psychological wellbeing which is necessary to deal their day to day life challenges. The psychosocial competence has been defined as "a person's ability to maintain a stage of psychological well-being and to demonstrate this in adoptive and positive behavior while interacting with others culture and environment" (WHO, 1999). According to World Health Organization (2002) psychosocial competence can be improved through teaching different life skills. Life skills defined as "Ability for adaptive and positive behavior that enables an individual to deal effectively with the demand and challenges of everyday life" (World Health Organization, 1994). World Health Organization (1993) has identified following ten core life skills: decision-making, problem-solving, empathy, self-awareness, communication skills, interpersonal relationship skills, coping with emotions, coping with stress, creative thinking skills, and critical thinking skills. Life skills training enhance an individual's behavior in many directions and dimensions (Francis, 2007). An important note of life skills training program is to help individuals in controlling several health problems namely depression, anxiety, rejection, anger and conflict in; however interpersonal relationship (Smith et al., 2004). Deficiency of essential life skills among our young generation is the major obstacle for their overall development. As young minds, these people need to be motivated and appropriately skilled. Life skills training at the school level definitely will promote healthy social and psychological behaviors among youth and work for the ideal 'prevention is better than cure.' Hence, in the present study the researcher intended to study the impact of life skills training on the general well-being

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among high school students and to study the influences of demographic variables (gender and area of the school) on the effectiveness of life skills training program in increasing general well-being.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The initial sample consisted of 450 high school students were randomly selected and recruited for this study from five high schools in the urban area of Tiptur, Karnataka State and five high schools from rural villages of Tiptur, Karnataka. Out of which, 200 students with low scores on life skills scale were selected and randomly divided into an experimental and control group. However, the equal number of urban, and rural children were included maintaining the equal number of boys and girls. Hence, a total of fifty boys and fifty girls for experimental group (N=100) and fifty boys and fifty girls for control group (N=100) included in the final study. PGI general well-being questionnaire was administered at the baseline and post-life skills training to the experimental group, while, the control group also administered the PGI general well-being questionnaire twice at the baseline and time two without life skills training.

Tools

PGI General Well-being Scale: The PGI General Well-being Scale assesses the general well-being of the participants. The scale was developed by Verma and Verma (1989), it consists of 20 items, and the participants had to respond to tick (✓) the items applicable to them. Numbers of ticks are counted and constitute the well-being score of the particular participants ranging from 0-20. Higher scores on the PGI general well-being scale are indicative of higher levels of general well-being. The reliability of the PGI General Well-being scale was determined to be 0.91. In the current study, the reliability of the scale was determined to be 0.71.

Life Skills Training

After selecting the participants for the main study, life skills training program covering ten skills given by WHO (1997) was conducted in twelve training sessions of 120 minutes as one session, once a week for the subjects of the experimental group alone. The training program involved lecture method, group activities, role-play and question, and answer method.

RESULTS

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the life skills intervention on participants' scores on the General Well-being Scale (Table 1). There was a statistically significant increase in General Well-being scores from pre-test (M = 8.61, SD = 0.67) to post-test (M = 14.07, SD = 2.40), $t(99) = -22.86$, $p < .01$. The mean increase in General Well-being scores was 5.46 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -5.93 to -4.98.

Table 1 Results of paired samples t-test and Descriptive Statistics for General Well-being by intervention

Outcome	Pre-test		Post-test		n	95% CI of difference	t	df
	M	SD	M	SD				
General Well-being	8.61	0.67	14.07	2.40	100	-5.93 to -4.98	-22.86**	99

** $p < .01$.

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The mean pre and post-test scores on General Well-being of male-female, rural-urban participants were presented in Tables 2 and 3, respectively. The result shows that life skills training were proved to be very useful in increasing the general well-being of the participants trained. On the whole, results found a mean increase of 5.46 from the pre to post-test situation (Pre-test 8.61; Post-test 14.07).

Table 2 Mean pre and post-test score on General Well-being of male and female students belonging to experimental and control groups

Group	Gender	Pre-test		Post-test		Change
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Experimental	Male	8.48	0.54	12.42	1.93	3.94
	Female	8.74	0.80	15.72	1.52	6.98
	Total	8.61	0.69	14.07	2.40	5.46
Control	Male	8.50	1.21	8.30	1.16	0.20
	Female	8.52	1.07	8.36	1.42	0.16
	Total	8.51	1.14	8.33	1.29	0.18
Total	Male	8.49	0.87	10.36	1.54	1.87
	Female	8.63	0.93	12.04	1.47	3.41
	Total	8.56	0.91	11.20	1.84	2.64

Table 3 Mean pre and post-test score on PGI general well-being of rural and urban students belonging to experimental and control groups

Group	Gender	Pre-test		Post-test		Change
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Experimental	Rural	8.54	0.54	13.22	2.55	4.68
	Urban	8.68	0.81	14.92	1.90	6.24
	Total	8.61	0.69	14.07	2.40	5.46
Control	Rural	8.38	0.92	8.42	1.12	0.04
	Urban	8.64	1.32	8.24	1.45	0.40
	Total	8.51	1.14	8.33	1.29	0.22
Total	Rural	8.46	0.73	10.82	1.83	2.36
	Urban	8.66	1.06	11.58	1.67	2.92
	Total	8.56	0.91	11.20	1.84	2.64

A two-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to assess the effectiveness of a life skills training program in increasing general well-being for male-female, rural-urban participants were presented in Tables 4 and 5, respectively. The independent variables were the type of group (experimental, control), gender and area. The dependent variable was scores on the General Well-being Scale, administered following completion of the intervention program (Post-test). Scores on the pre-test General Well-being Scale were used as a covariate to control for individual differences.

Preliminary checks were conducted to ensure that there was no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, homogeneity of regression slopes, and reliable measurement of the covariate. After adjusting for General Well-being Scale at pre-test, there was a significant interaction effect $F(1, 195) = 54.22, p < 0.01$, with effect size (partial eta squared = .21). The main effects were also statistically significant for both group $F(1, 195) = 690.68, p < 0.01$; and gender $F(1, 195) = 58.10, p < 0.01$. These results suggest that males and females respond differently to the intervention. Females ($M = 15.72, SD = 1.52$)

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showed a more substantial increase in general well-being after participation in the life skills training program than males ($M = 12.42$, $SD = 1.93$).

Table 4 Two-way ANCOVA Results for General Well-being by Group Condition and Gender

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Pre-General Well-being	2.38	1	2.38	1.00	.317
Group	1636.02	1	1636.02	690.68	.000
Gender	137.62	1	137.62	58.10	.000
Group * Gender	128.43	1	128.43	54.22	.000
Error	461.90	195	2.37		

Note. $R^2 = .80$, Adj. $R^2 = .80$, adjustments based on Pre-Life Skills mean = 8.56.

After adjusting for General Well-being Scale at pre-test, there was a significant interaction effect $F(1, 195) = 13.48$, $p < .01$, with a large effect size (partial eta squared = .06). The main effects were also statistically significant for both group $F(1, 195) = 484.93$, $p < .01$; and area $F(1, 195) = 7.56$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that rural and urban participants respond differently to the intervention. Urban area students ($M = 14.92$, $SD = 1.90$) showed a more substantial increase in general well-being after participation in the life skills training program than rural area students ($M = 12.42$, $SD = 1.93$).

Table 5 Two-way ANCOVA Results for General Well-being by Group Condition and Area

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Pre-General Well-being	7.89	1	7.89	2.34	.127
Group	1630.53	1	1630.53	484.93	.000
Area	25.44	1	25.44	7.56	.007
Group * Area	45.34	1	45.34	13.48	.000
Error	655.66	195	3.36		

Note. $R^2 = .72$, Adj. $R^2 = .72$, adjustments based on Pre-Life Skills mean = 8.56.

DISCUSSION

The study intended to investigate the effectiveness of life skills training program on the general well-being of the high school students and also to study the influences of demographic variables (gender and area of the school) on the effectiveness of life skills training program in increasing general well-being. These findings suggest that there was an increase in general well-being after the successful completion of life skills training program. The positive impact of life skills training on well-being of an individual is consistent with the previous studies (Yadav & Iqbal, 2009; Niaraki & Rahimi, 2013; Farnia, Yazdi & Abarghouei, 2016; Vijendra Kumar & Krishnamurthy, 2016).

The result of the present research shows that gender has a significant influence on increasing general well-being due to life skills training. In the present study, male and female students have responded differently on life skills training. The result posits that female participants were more benefited and increased their general well-being scores than male participants. These results were similar to Vijendra Kumar and Krishnamurthy (2016), which suggests that girls had higher scores in the psychological well-being than boys. Furthermore, the results are also in line with previous research on life skills training (Savoji & Ganji, 2013; Shah, 2014).

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Furthermore, the results support that area of the school has a significant influence on the general well-being of participants of life skills training program. The result shows that urban area students had a substantial increase in the general well-being scores after the training program. This can be explained that compared to rural area schools, urban area school students' exposure to the various aspects of life such as environment, parent's education, knowledge, and involvement in the children activities might have influenced in the benefiting in the life skills training program.

Limitations of the Study

It is important to note several limitations to the study. First, the demographic variables represented were minimal. This limitation makes it difficult to generalize the findings of the study results. Second, the sample size for each group 100 students includes five schools from an urban area and five schools from rural area. A more diverse sample might be more informative.

Future Recommendations

The evidence from this study suggests that life skills intervention programs play a vital role in the development of healthy future adult generation of our society. Being largest adolescent populated country, it could be beneficial for the adolescents to participate in the life skills training program. The researchers strongly felt that there should be a policy on life skills education for all the school going children for the benefit of our country's generation.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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