

## The Impact of Intervention (Life Skill Training) on Behavior Modification among Secondary School Students

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### ABSTRACT

Adolescence is the most critical phase of an individual. The highly competitive world of today and the absence of traditional norms and support have heightened the stress among adolescents resulting in multiple issues such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, rejection, diffidence, anger, confliction in interpersonal relationship, alcohol abuse and criminal behaviour. As a baseline study, Behaviour issues due to delay in milestone development was assessed and it was identified that there were no serious delays catered to the behavioral issues of adolescents. But through discussions with the primary kin and important others, it was identified that environment and the highly competitive world has heightened the behavioral and cognitive problems among adolescents. Therefore Life Skills is seen as a vaccine to protect the child from exposure to various hazards. The present study attempts to find out the impact of the life skill intervention among adolescents and assess their changes in the behaviour in their approach to critical life events. Through this study researcher tries to test the relationships between independent and dependent of life skill training (intervention) on the behavioral and cognitive changes of adolescents to critical life events using experimental research design. The data was collected from the 50 adolescent students, and data analysis was done through student's t- Test for reaching to the findings. It was found that post- life skill training; there was substantial improvement in their level of cognitive skills such as self-awareness, creative thinking, critical thinking, decision making and problem solving. And these improvements paved the way for the students to have a better behaviour towards their critical life events. Hence, it was concluded that there is visible impact of life skill training on the behaviour as well as thinking pattern of the adolescent.

**Keywords:** *Adolescents, Cognitive and Behaviour Problems, Intervention (Life Skill Training)*

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Adolescence is a critical age; it is a springboard towards the future. However, this critical period presents many challenges to the child. Stuart Judge, while defining adolescence, states that “the onset of adolescence cannot be pinpointed in physiological terms, although it is influenced by the same sex hormones and refers to the same general period as physical sexual development. It represents a complex and sometimes disturbing psychological transition, accompanying the prerequisite for the accepted social behaviour of the particular adult culture.” This transition wherein the childish attitudes and behaviour are shed for mature ones, is not consistently progressive, but is marked by “shifting backward and forward from old to new behaviour, from old to new attitudes” (Hurlock, 1957, p. 7). Piagets’ (1969) comment, “Psychologically, adolescence is the age when the individual becomes integrated into the society of adults, the age when the child no longer feels that he is below the level of the adults, but is equal, at least in rights” wherein this integration “also includes very profound intellectual changes” (Hurlock, 1981, p. 239). Kuhlen confine the major transitional adjustments in 4 areas: 1.sex-social adjustments, 2. ideological adjustments 3.vocational adjustments and 4. adjustments relating to the accomplishment of freedom from parents. Such a consideration of four dimensions is important as the outcome of this stress management largely decides the future of the adolescents (1952, p. 5). As adolescence is the most critical phase of an individual. The highly competitive world of today and the absence of traditional norms and support have heightened the stress among adolescents resulting in multiple issues such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, rejection, diffidence, anger, confliction in interpersonal relationship, alcohol abuse and criminal behaviour. As a baseline study, Behaviour issues due to delay in milestone development was assessed and it was identified that there were no serious delays catered to the behavioral issues of adolescents. But through discussions with the primary kin and important others, it was identified that environment and the highly competitive world has heightened the behavioral and cognitive problems among adolescents. And they need a wide range of intra- and interpersonal skills to face the multifaceted challenges of today’s world.

Therefore, Life skills competencies are necessary for the total development of students. The competencies are the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior that students need to possess to become healthy and well-balanced individuals. Schools will need to appreciate the inextricable link between physical, cognitive, psycho-social and psycho-sexual development and to adopt a balanced approach that pays attention to these dimensions in their students (Jigger, 2005).

Psychosocial competence has an important role to play among the adolescents in terms of physical, mental and social wellbeing. In particular, where the issues related to behaviour, and where the behaviour is related to an capability to deal with stressors and pressures in life, the enhancement in the psychosocial competence could make an important contribution. The most direct intervention for promotion of Psychosocial competence are those which enhance the individuals coping

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resources, and personal and social competence through life skill training (WHO,1994). According to WHO, the life skills are;

1. *Self-awareness* includes our recognition of ourselves, of our character, of our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognize when we are stressed or feel under pressure. It is also often a prerequisite for effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy for others.
2. *Empathy* is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person, even in a situation that we may not be familiar with. Empathy can help us to understand and accept others who may be very different from ourselves. Empathy can also help to encourage nurturing behaviour towards people in need of care and assistance, or tolerance, as is the case with AIDS sufferers, or people with mental disorders, who may be stigmatized and ostracized by the very people they depend upon for support.
3. *Creative thinking* contributes to both decision making and problem solving by enabling us to explore the available alternatives and various consequences of our actions or non-action. It helps us to look beyond our direct experience, and even if no problem is identified, or no decision is to be made, creative thinking can help us to respond adaptively and with flexibility to the situations of our daily lives.
4. *Critical thinking* is the ability to think clearly and rationally. It includes the ability to do reflective and independent thinking. Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.
5. *Coping with stress* is about recognising the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help to control our levels of stress. This may mean that we take action to reduce the sources of stress, for example, by making changes to our physical environment or lifestyle. Or it may mean learning how to relax, so that tensions created by unavoidable stress do not give rise to health problems.
6. *Coping with emotions* involves recognising emotions in ourselves and others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour, and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions, like anger or sorrow can have negative effects on our health if we do not react appropriately.
7. *Effective communication* means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations. This means being able to express opinions and desires, but also needs and fears. And it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.
8. Interpersonal relationship skills help us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well-being. It may mean keeping good relations

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with family members, which are an important source of social support. It may also mean being able to end relationships constructively.

9. *Decision making* helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health if young people actively make decisions about their actions in relation to health by assessing the different options, and what effects different decisions may have.
10. *Problem solving* enables us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain.

Effective attainment and application of life skills can influence the thought process, behaviour and the way individuals feel about themselves and others, and equally will influence the way people perceived by others. Life skills contribute to the perceptions of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem. Life skills therefore play an important role in the endorsement of mental well-being of adolescents which helps them in improved behaviour towards the state of affairs that they need to confront. The promotion of mental well-being contributes to motivation to look after themselves and others, the prevention of psychological issues, and the avoidance of health and behaviour problems.

### ***Significance of the study***

There is concern over the rising cases of adolescents in getting opportunities for usage of substances, peer influence, career selection, lack of trust, recognition and respect, interpersonal relationships issues, emotional instability and adjustment issues. As a baseline study, behaviour issues due to delay in milestone development was assessed and it was identified that there were no serious delays catered to the behavioral issues of adolescents. But all the way through discussions with the primary kin and important others, it was recognized that environment and the extremely competitive world has heightened the behavioral and cognitive problems among adolescents. According to different studies the challenges faced by adolescents in the secondary school in problems such as substance usage, peer pressure etc. are considered to be related to the insufficient Life Skills. Life skills should equip the learners with psychosocial competencies to know themselves, the ability to make informed decision, work out problems, think creatively and critically, communicate effectively, as well as to build healthy interpersonal relationships during this life stage. Since there is an urgent need to help the adolescents in dealing with the life events, with life skills, one is able to explore alternatives, ponder on pros and cons and make rational decisions in solving every problem or issue as it arises. Given all the above, a school may be regarded as an appropriate platform for the introduction of Life Skills Education. This is all the more meaningful, because of the role of schools in the socialization of the young people, access to adolescents on a massive scale, experienced teachers in place, high credibility with parents and community members, as well as possibilities for short and long term evaluation. Therefore this study was carried out to examine the effectiveness of the implementation of Life Skill Training.

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### ***Objectives of the study***

1. To assess the level of self-awareness, creative thinking and critical thinking, decision making and problem solving among adolescents prior to training.
2. To provide life skill intervention to adolescents for their cognitive and behavioral changes while dealing with the critical life events.
3. To assess the level of life skills training on self-awareness, creative thinking and critical thinking, decision making and problem solving of the adolescents' post-training.

### ***Hypothesis***

- There is significant difference in the behaviour of the adolescents after the intervention (life skill training).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research design***

The design used in the baseline study is descriptive in nature. Through this study the researcher tries to learn more in analyzing the emotional and behavioral problems in adolescents due to delay in milestone development.

Through the intervention study researcher tries to test the relationships between independent and dependent variables through the study the impact of life skill training (intervention) on the behavioral response and cognition of adolescents to critical life events. Hence, the design of research is experimental in nature.

### ***Sample Size***

50 adolescent students from Mary Rani Public School, Kottayam District were the samples used in this study. There were equal percent of the student respondents from the respective classes.

### ***Unit of study***

An adolescent student studying in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> standards between the age group of 13 and 16 in Mary Rani Public School.

### ***Tools of Data Collection***

Developmental Psychopathology Check-List developed by NIMHANS, was used in the baseline study. It is a screening tool to assess the psycho-pathology in children. It includes the developmental history, developmental problems, psychopathology, psychosocial factors, temperamental profile and social support and assets of the child is included.

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Life Skill Assessment Scale was used in and for the intervention done among the adolescents, which was developed in Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development by A. Radhakrishnan Nair.

### ***Data Analysis***

Data analysis and interpretation was done through student's t- Test to find out whether there is significant mean difference in the groups. In this section of research, the researcher could analyze the data through frequencies and percentages as well as the significance obtained to generalize the findings.

### ***Procedure***

The researcher The 25 students were selected in both the experimental and control group for the present intervention study. The training (intervention) was done in the experimental group. The researcher has conducted discussion among the adolescents in the school were pre and post test was conducted. The major questions discussed in the group were based on the thinking and behavioral responses of the adolescents related to the 5 life skills on self-awareness, creative thinking, critical thinking, decision making and problem solving when circumstances arouse for the encounter.

### ***Intervention***

Main 5 life skills of self-awareness, creative thinking, critical thinking, decision making and problem solving were taken for the intervention (training) as they form the base for the rest of the aspects of communication, establishing and maintaining relationship etc. The intervention was given through 5 sessions of 2 hours for each skill. The sessions were conducted using activities, role plays and discussions among the study group members. And the post test was conducted after 3 months from the time after the pre test.

## **RESULTS**

The data was collected from 50 adolescents who are studying in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> standards. 58% of the respondents were male and 42% were female. In the baseline study, the researcher could find that 60% of the students did not show many problems in their emotions and behavior. While 40% of the students showed some kind of problem in their temperamental dimensions. But none of them were in any severe stage of the behavioral problems. Among these students, 12% students were facing Learning Disorders and just 14% students were Hyper-kinesis and no students, demonstrated any problems relating to somatic symptoms, psychoses, family history and psychosocial stressors. There were no much developmental delays and pathological issues to hamper the behaviour and cognition of the adolescents. And in the intervention given to the experimental group,

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1. The Post-training the respondents were able to strike a balanced view with regard to their relations considering the level of intimacy, nature of relations, trust, recognition and respect to others.

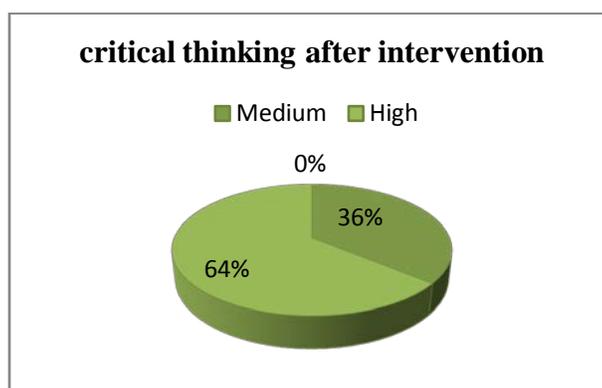
Post Self Awareness	Frequency	Percent
Medium	15	30.0
High	35	70.0
Total	50	100.0

2. The post-training the respondents were able to manage emotions and adjust to different stressful situations -anger, sadness, happiness, fear, shame, guilt and love towards others and express it appropriately.
3. Before training respondents especially boys had to use substances like alcohol, cigarettes etc due to curiosity, Post-training they could effectively handle the situations that arise out of peer pressure.
4. The post-training the respondents could think better and decide the Career aspects in accordance with their skill seek information and clear their doubts without hesitation.

### *The level of improvement in Life Skill Post Training*

As all knows adolescence is a transition period that bridges childhood and adulthood, during which major physical, cognitive and psychological changes occur which needs to be addressed.

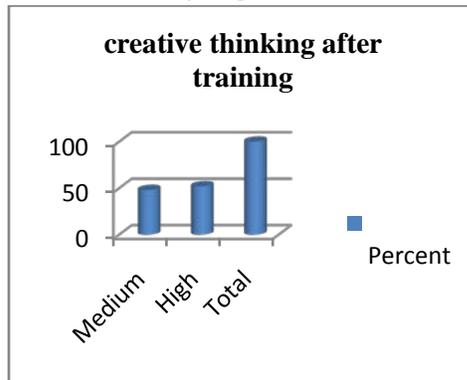
1. It was noted that there has been substantial improvement in level of self-awareness post-training. The level of awareness which was found to 'medium' among half of the respondents was found to improve to a level of to a "high-level" in almost three-quarters of the respondents post-training.



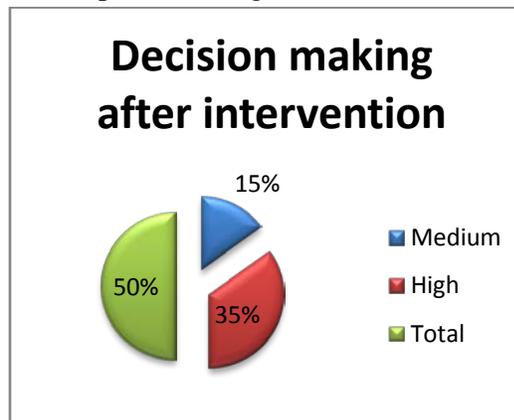
2. It also became clear that before giving training on life skills the critical thinking skill for the adolescent students was only 36% in high level of critical thinking which included the ability to look at situations and its analysis, ability to think clearly in a crisis situation etc, which is

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necessary for a growing generation. But after the training intervention in the controlled group 64% of the respondents could think critically high.



3. 24% of the respondents including both the groups were with high level capacity on making choice for taking proper decision, looking into the whole picture of the situation before providing the life skill training intervention. And the situation had changed 70% after the training for the respondents; the expected change has been visible among the respondents.



4. 32% of the respondents have only the high level efficiency in problem solving by finding various options to deal with the problem, ability to identify my problems clearly, ability to explain self what actually the problem. The level of effective problem solving has become 52% for the respondents who were in the controlled group as high after the training.

Problem Solving Post Intervention	Frequency	Percent
Medium	24	48.0
High	26	52.0
Total	50	100.0

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### The significance between two variables are identified through T test

1. The mean score for self-awareness had improved 2.94 unit (pre-test:36.30, post-test:39.24) from the pre-test level; the improvement was found to be statistically significant at .000 at 99% level of confidence, which means there is significance change between self awareness of the respondent before life skill training and self awareness after the life skill training.

Mean score	Mean	N	std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Self Awareness	36.3000	50	4.47328	.63262
P Self Awareness	39.2400	50	5.79430	.81944

2. The mean score for creative thinking had improved 1.14 unit (pre-test:28.2, post-test:29.3) from the pre-test level; the improvement was found to be statistically significant at .003 at 95% level of confidence, which shows that there is significant between creative thinking of the respondent before life skill training and creative thinking after the life skill training.

Mean score	Mean	N	std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Creative Thinking	8.2600	50	2.70155	.38206
P Creative Thinking	9.3200	50	2.86741	.40551

Mean score	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Critical thinking	8.8600	50	3.69230	.52217
P critical thinking	41.9200	50	4.91910	.69567

3. The mean score for Critical thinking had improved 3.1 unit (pre-test:38.8, post-test:41.9) from the pre-test level; the improvement was found to be statistically significant at .003 at 95% level of confidence, which means there is worth change between critical thinking of the respondent before life skill training and critical thinking after the life skill training.
4. The mean score for decision making had improved 2.94 unit (pre-test:36.30, post-test:39.24) from the pre-test level; the improvement was found to be statistically significant at .000 at 99% level of confidence, which means there is significance change between decision making of the respondent before life skill training and decision making after the life skill training.

Mean score	Mean	N	std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Decision making	36.3000	50	4.47328	.63262
P decision making	39.2400	50	5.79430	.81944

5. The mean score for problem solving had improved 3.92 unit (pre-test:32.34, post-test:36.26) from the pre-test level; the improvement was found to be statistically significant at .000 at

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99% level of confidence, which means there is worth change occurred between of problem solving of the respondents before and after the life skill training.

Mean score	Mean	N	std. Deviation	std Error mean
Problem Solving	2.3400	50	4.01838	.56828
Post Problem Solving	6.2600	50	6.64189	.93930

6. This means a significant level of change has occurred in the level of self awareness, creative thinking, critical thinking, problem solving and decision making of the respondents after the life skill training and there is visible impact of life skill training on the adolescent respondents' cognitive and behavioural aspects (response) with regard to their critical life events.

### CONCLUSION

In India, today's adolescents are exposed to more information and cultural alternatives than in earlier periods. This provides them with culturally diverse choices, which cannot be easily exercised due to the economic dependence on parents and other significant others. And the adolescents have to be prepared for a global successful adult life which is possible only through enhancing and improving their psychosocial competence through life skill training even though there are no issues in the milestone development which can affect behaviour of the adolescents. The most important aspect is that of learning life skills which are essentially those abilities which help in promoting the mental well-being of every individual especially the adolescents who are in their transition age. This enables one to deal effectively with the everyday challenges and help the adolescents to learn and practice skills. The adolescents will be motivated in utilizing the creative techniques in studies to reduce the problems of exam stress, burden in studies, inability to concentrate while studying etc. so the creativity thinking in life skills help the student to get rid of the difficulties in study. Aggressive behavior can be tackled by building good interpersonal relationships with others and by teaching him the ways of effective communication. The skill in good decision making helps the student to prevent drug abuse and sexual experimentation. Apart from that if the student is doing the such behavior under the influence of friends or media the training can develop critical thinking in student to analyze the situation critically and decide whether they depend on friends decision or not. Unhealthy relationship and lack of communication among students creates many psychosocial problems like depression, stress, suicidal attempts, over use of drugs, anti-social behavior and violence can all be dealt very effectively through proper life skill intervention bringing cognitive and behavioral changes. Therefore life skill training is necessary in every stages of life, particularly in the adolescent period.

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