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Life Skills among Male and Female Students at Elementary Level



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Abstract

The socio-cultural and economic structure of society is changing rapidly. Individual needs additional skills and abilities to adjust effectively in this changing scenario. Life skills involve those abilities which help an individual to adjust better in his/her surroundings. These are essential abilities that should be inculcated among children since the beginning of schooling. Hence, education should incorporate life skills education in general curriculum. It should include the content, tasks and activities which can inculcate life skills among growing children, especially at elementary level. The present paper is an attempt to study the life skills of students at elementary level. The main objective was to study the difference between life skills among male and female students at elementary level. A sample of 70 students was taken and survey method was adopted for this study.

Keywords: Life Skills

Introduction

The children, today, are getting undue pressure from school, family and society as well to achieve and perform much more in every sphere of life. The entire education system in India, from primary to higher education level, is marks oriented and promoting the students to earn higher scores in examination. Failing of which they become victims of different psycho-social problems leading to stress, insecurity, self-doubt, life taking risk, drug addiction, sexual abuse etc. Education, which is expected to prepare them for the better adjustment, is causing additional burden for them due to its defective treatment. It is not supporting the child 'to know the best within him/her and his/her surrounding', 'to be an ideal human being', 'to do which make him/her self-dependent and self-reliant' 'to live together to make a peaceful and healthy social environment'. Education should aim at inculcating these skills among students (Delor's Report, 1996). These skills will facilitate the individual to adjust effectively in environment, make sustainable use of available resources, identifying and utilising opportunities and face the challenges of life. To bring these behavioural changes in the child the school curriculum should be enriched, with a highly researched and effective life skills education programme. A Life skills empowered child has the competence to deal with the challenges of life using the existing resources even amidst different adversities. (Srikala and Kishor, 2010)

Review of Literature

Life skills are psycho-social skills that empower individual's physical, psychological and social well being to execute better social functioning and choose the right life style. There is no universally accepted definition of life skills. However, different organizations have defined the term life skills. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as, "A skill that is necessary or desirable for full participation in everyday life". Life skills are the personal, interpersonal and cognitive psycho-social skills that facilitate people to interact appropriately manage their own emotional states and make decisions and choices for an active, safe and productive life (UNICEF 2012). Life Skills are the abilities for adoptive and positive behaviour that enables individuals to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life (WHO, 1997). Here adaptive means a person having flexible approach and ability to adjust in different circumstance. Positive behaviour means a person is forward looking and is able to find a way even in worst conditions. The strength of positive behavior is based upon the depth of skills learned by the individual (Nair, Subasree and Ranjan, 2010). World Health Organisation (WHO) enlists ten life skills i.e. problem solving, critical thinking, decision making, creative thinking,

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effective communication, interpersonal relationship, self-awareness, empathy, coping with stress and coping with emotions.

Life skills are considered necessary for healthy development of children and adolescent, their socialisation and preparing them to adjust effectively in the changing social environment (WHO, 1999). The development of human skills, including life skills, is necessary to meet the demands of the emerging knowledge economy and society. These skills are needed to be developed on the basis of lifelong learning approach. (Some Inputs for Draft National Education Policy 2016, MHRD) The circular issued by CBSE states that: "Adolescence is a time of immense creative energy, self-discovery and a desire to explore the world. Children can be fraught with feelings of isolation, loneliness and confusion. Lessons in life skills help in the holistic development of children and its significance cannot be ignored".

Studies have proved that life skills play an important role in the well being of children as well as young people. Anuradha (2012) found a strong relation between the life skills and self concept. Development of life skills develops the self concept of adolescents. Bardhan (2016) with her case study has proved that with the training of life skills one can bring positive changes among the children with problem behaviour. Bharath and Kumar (2010) have found life skills education an effective way to improve mental health of adolescents through participatory method of games, debates, role play and group discussions with active participation of teachers. Malik (2012) has studied the effect of life skills training on academic anxiety, adjustment and self esteem level in early adolescents and found a remarkable improvement in these all. Moshki et al (2014) studied the effect of life skills training on drug abuse prevention and found it very effective in reducing drug abuse tendency. Amirian (2012) has found a positive effect of life skills education on the academic achievement of first year high school male students. (Singh, 2017) found in his experiment that life skills at elementary level can better be taught to the students through activity based learning.

Nelson Mandela, the first president of post apartheid South Africa, once said, "Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine that the child of a farm worker can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another" (cited in WDR 2019).

In the present study an attempt has been made to study the life skills of students at elementary level. The main objective is to study the difference between life skills among male and female students at elementary level. Elementary level comprises the students studying in first to eighth standard or the students of 6-14 years age-group. The present study was conducted on students of 11-13 years age-group. Psychology considers this as pre-adolescence stage and it will be very useful to study the existing level of

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life skills among them. By knowing the existing level of life skills among these students, it will be useful for teachers, parents, curriculum designers and administrators to plan a suitable programme of life skills education for them. Life skills education through general curriculum will help them to face the challenges of adolescence stage and to adjust effectively in psycho-social environment (Prajina 2014).

Objectives of the study

1. To study the life skills among elementary level students.
2. To compare the life skills among male and female students at elementary level.

Hypotheses of the Study

There is no significant difference between life skills of male and female students at elementary level.

Methodology

In the present study the descriptive survey method was adopted and the elementary level students of Holy Public School, Bupp (Sirsa) were the population. A sample of 70 (44 boys and 26 girls) elementary level students, from six sections of 7th & 8th grade, was selected randomly. Life Skills Assessment Scale (LSAS) by A. Radhakrishnan Nair, R. Subasree and Sunitha Ranjan was used to assess the Life skills among students. In this study different statistics like, percentage to find out the number and percentages of students having different level of life skills, and mean, standard deviation and t-test statistical techniques were employed for the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Table No. 1: Percentage of Elementary Level Students Regarding Life Skills Level

Classification	Life Skills Global Score (Total)	Number of Students	% of Students
Very High	Above 417	0	0
High	387-417	0	0
Average	325-386	02	2.85
Low	293-324	39	55.71
Very Low	Below 293	29	41.42
Total	500	70	100%

Table No. 1 describes the different level of life skills among elementary level students. It can be observed from the table that *none* of the elementary level students has very high or high level of life skills while only 2.85% (2) of elementary level students have average level of life skills. Further from the table it's also clear that 55.71 % (39) of the elementary level students have low level of life skills while 41.42% (29) of elementary level students have very low level of life skill.

Interpretation

After analyzing the data as interpreted in above table, it can be concluded that students at elementary level have different and low level of life skills. It is clear from the table that majority of the students have low or very low level of life skills, while only few of the students have average level of Life Skills.

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Table No. 2: Mean, SD and t-value of Male and Female Students Regarding Life Skills at Elementary Level

Group	Sample Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value
Male	44	295.65	16.77	0.33
Female	26	294.34	18.91	

*not significant at 0.05 level.

The above table shows the mean and standard deviation scores and t-value of male and female students regarding life skills at elementary level. The mean scores of male and female students are 295.65 and 294.34 respectively and standard deviation scores are 16.77 and 18.91 respectively. The calculated t-value is 0.33 which is lesser than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, null hypothesis i.e. 'there is no significant difference between life skills of male and female students at elementary level' is accepted. It may be concluded that there is no significant difference between the life skills of male and female students at elementary level.

Interpretation

It is clear from the obtained results that there is no significant difference between the life skills among male and female students at elementary level as the difference in the mean scores of male and female student are not significant. It can be concluded that the level of life skills among male and female students at elementary level is not different.

Results and Discussion

This study was conducted to find out the level of life skills among elementary level students and effect of gender. The results obtained from the study shows that a little number of students studying at elementary level have average level of essential ten core life skills and majority of students have low and very low level of life skills. The results show that there is a strong need of developing life skills among the students at elementary level. The transaction of life skills among students at this level will help them to face the challenges of their everyday life. Life skills are abilities for adoptive and positive behaviour that enable an individual to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (WHO, 1994). Elementary education ensures the all round development of children by building academic, social, emotional and economical skills among them. The curriculum including life skills will help the students to develop their potentials. Hence, life skill education should be started at the elementary level.

The results show that the level of life skills among male and female students at elementary level is equal and there is no effect of gender on life skills among students at elementary level. These findings have similarities with the findings of different researches related to life skills. Anuradha (2012) observed no significant association among socio-demographic variables and life skills of students. Sandhu (2014) found no difference in the life skills with reference to gender and location. Kaur (2015) found that there is no difference in the life skills of student teachers with reference to gender and location.

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Educational Implications

The life skills are essential for the individual to adjust effectively in his/her surrounding. It will be helpful for teachers, parents and students if we find out the existing level of life skills among students and then try accordingly to inculcate these skills. This study will be helpful for teachers in the identification and understanding of life skills, its different dimensions and their importance for students and to plan an effective learning environment to develop life skills among students. This study will be helpful for the educational policy makers, administrators and curriculum developers in planning and constructing curriculum by keeping in mind transaction of life skills based education.

Conclusion

The students at elementary level are younger adolescents and at this stage individual has to go through physical, social, emotional, psychological and behavioural changes. Students at this stage are considered as the most productive part of society but in lack of proper skills and support their potential can be wasted or remain unutilized. From this study it is clear that majority of students have low or very low level of life skills, while very few have average level of life skills. Life Skill education can help in the development of their full potential and they can become the responsible member of society.

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