



INTRODUCTION OF LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION IN CURRICULUM FOR CREATIVE AND POSITIVE SOCIAL FUNCTIONING AMONG YOUNG STUDENTS

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Abstract:

Young people today are growing up with an increasing sense of suspicion and gloom. Their mind is concluded by anxiety and trepidation about their future, academic and career. Self-esteem is a discernible effect on academic performance. Low self-esteem and lack of effective skill can lessen students desire to learn, their ability to focus, and their willingness to take risks. Psychosocial competence is a person's ability to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. It is a person's ability to maintain a state of mental well-being and to demonstrate "I adoptive and positive behavior" while interacting with others, his/her culture and environment. It enhances the person's coping resources, and personal and social competencies. When learning environment is motivated with positive thinking and helps to look forward to the future with hope and confidence then students find themselves adequately prepared to handle pressures and stresses of life. Study investigated self-esteem and life skills acquired by students and their association for their academic performance. Possessing self-esteem is very important for the students to gain positivism, and maintain the idea that they are capable of pursuing difficulties in education. Life skills training in schools must meet the social and emotional developmental needs of students for effective teaching and learning to take place and for students to reach their full potential. Study determined an effective and creative life skills education package for curriculum which can move towards better preparing youth to enter and contribute to a competitive and global workforce.

Index Terms: Curriculum, Life Skills Education, Self Esteem & Students

Introduction:

Psychosocial proficiency is a person's ability to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. It enhances the person's coping resources, and personal and social competencies. When learning environment is motivated with positive thinking and helps to look forward to the future with hope and confidence and helps to prepare adequately to handle pressures and stresses of life. While education aims to empower people with accurate, age appropriate and culturally relevant information to promote healthy attitudes and develop skills to enable to respond to real life situations in positive and responsible ways. The significance of young people is being acknowledged as a very important and potent group of the world over. There is a realization that if we have prepared them as a productive human capital, the foundation has to be laid during the phase of the life cycle.

Student life is marked by all-round intellectual and mental growth. The parents expect from them to perform well in academic and compliance to family and societal values. The teachers want them to be disciplined, intelligent and hard -working. They have to follow certain standards and rules of behavior and actions, including a list of do's and don'ts. They have to become accustomed to these changes and cope with the substantial problems, meet the expectations of the parents, teachers and guardians to

manage their personal needs and ambitions. As a result of this complex situation, they face uncertainties and dilemmas and find themselves, often, crossroads of life. This is not only generates a lot of stress for them, but also enhances their vulnerability to unhealthy and wrongful practices. While they confront problems and seek responses to their concerns that are emblematic of this phase of life, on the other hand, they also have ways of opportunities and possibilities to grow and shape their life in the manner they consider appropriate.

Young people today are growing up with an increasing sense of suspicion and gloom. Recent studies show that there is significant rise in the problems faced by the young people for example, serious emotional disturbances has increased (WHO, 2001), increased sexual activity in schools, rise in AIDS cases in India & greater use of alcohol consumption has been found (BSS, 2007). Apart from the above, use of heavy drugs and youth drop outs have also increased in the recent years (UNICEF, 2001). Their mind is concluded by anxiety and trepidation about their future, academic and career. Young age is a period of hope, aspirations and dreams for them, it also brings them face to face with hard realities of life. As whole, the society, family and educational institutions, in particular, have the enormous responsibility to ensure that young people (students) are supported and guided in their path to growth and development, regardless of the setting in which they live and their path to growth and development. It should prepare them to face the challenges of life in an assured and constrictive manner; and transmit values that are important for the growth of the family, welfare of the community and indeed, national development. The present study aspires to bring an effective model of education system to enhance young students to be creative and able to acquire healthy life.

Self Esteem:

Self-esteem is a discernible effect on academic performance. Self-esteem, as an overall manifestation of an individual's sense of worth includes beliefs about oneself as well as an emotional response to those beliefs. It represents the capacity to feel worthy of happiness and be able to successfully address life challenges, mental health and development in young people. Self-esteem is defined as "appreciator to be accountable for oneself and to act responsibly toward others" (California State Department of Education, 1990). Self-esteem replicates a person's overall subjective emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is a self judgment as well as an attitude toward the self. Battle (1982) defined the concept of self-esteem as a subjective, evaluative phenomenon which determines the individual's characteristic perception of self-worth.

Accordingly, low self-esteem has been associated with a number of psychological, physical, and social consequences. Low self-esteem and lack of effective skill can lessen students desire to learn, their ability to focus, and their willingness to take risks. It may influence successful development and the transition to adulthood, including various types of risk factors and problems. Low self-esteem in young people may be a forerunner for poor longer-term outcomes, such as fewer years of post-secondary education, greater likelihood of joblessness and financial difficulties, as well as poorer mental/physical health and higher rates of criminal behavior. Self-esteem among students is very important which helps them to gain positivism, and maintain the idea that they are capable of pursuing difficulties in education. It is a powerful element as demonstrated in one study among adolescents; their academic achievement was reported to be positively related to the growth rate of self-esteem, indicating that as their performance in education grew, as did their self-esteem (Lee, J., 2012). Therefore

identification of modifiable risk factors for low self-esteem in students is essential in developing interventions to prevent and to boost their self-esteem.

Life Skills:

Life skills are abilities that help to promote mental well being, competence for adaptive and positive behavior that enable young minds to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (WHO, 19961). Life skills are essentially those abilities that help promote mental well being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. UNICEF and WHO recognizes that life skills are generally applied in various aspects of life. Such as in the context of health and social events like human relationships, learning about social influences on behavior and learning about rights and responsibilities, as well as being taught in the context of health problems. Life skills education programme is a very important and integral part of the educational system worldwide. Life skill education strives to provide students with tactics to make healthy choices that contribute to a momentous life. The programme should intend for their holistic development while responding to their special concerns and problems.

The standard Life Skills are as follows.

- ✓ Critical thinking and creative thinking
- ✓ Decision making and problem solving
- ✓ Communication skills and interpersonal relations
- ✓ Coping with emotions and stress
- ✓ Self-awareness and empathy

Young people represents a critical period in a person's life as whatever socialization, learning and experiences they have, characteristics and response tendencies they inculcate and the problems they face go a long way in influencing their personal, social and occupational behavior throughout their later life. It is said to be a period of emotional upheaval and stress and storm, deficient and destructive behavior, wide range of fears like facing demands and challenges of exams, school drop outs, feelings of inadequacy, sorting out questions related to sexuality, job anxiety and interpersonal problems (Wilson, Peter, 1995). In advance of education sector reform, managing life skills programming can be a challenge. It may create friction with teachers and students, who are already under pressure from a packed curriculum and an exam-based assessment system. The present education curriculum should promote skill oriented syllabus to train students.

The current study emphasizes on young students which is effective area of research. Young students need to be enhanced with creative and assertive skills to ponder over daily difficult situation and stay away from risk factors. Identifying modifiable risk factors and better understanding the multiple influences at play may guide efforts to bolster self-esteem among adolescents.

Methods and Tools:

The present study consists of 210 students (105 girls and 105 boys) 12 to 21 years Mangalore city of Dakshina Kannada, Karnataka State, India. The participants of this study were from High schools, PU and degree colleges in Mangalore city were randomly selected. The sample allocated was proportional. The systematic random sampling technique was applied to identify the respondents to be included. A structured questionnaire in terms of demographic and social skills were developed and administered to the participants. In order to assess self-esteem Rosenberg scale was used. The questionnaire and consent documents were developed in English and local language. Data were checked for completeness and entered into SPSS version 16.0 for further analysis. Ethical clearance and permission was obtained as well as oral consent

was obtained with the students and was assured confidentiality by using anonymous questions and by conducting the interviews.

Study Analysis, Findings and Results:

A. Self Esteem among Adolescents:

Self-esteem			
Gender	Low Self Esteem (below 15)	Normal Range of Self Esteem (15 to25)	High Self Esteem (Above 25)
Male	72(68.57)	32(30.48)	1(0.9)
Female	46(43.81)	57(54.29)	2(1.90)

Table 1.01

(Rosenberg Scale for Self-esteem.... The scale ranges from 0-30. Scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range; scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem)

Self-esteem is an important element of every students in their quest to attain academic completion and performance. Self-esteem is thus, proven to be profoundly related to student’s academic achievement (Whitesell, N.R, Mitchell, C.M., Spicer, P., and The Voices of Indian Teens Project Team, 2009). Young people are in the stage of confusion, having to decide whether they want to stay in their own world, or escape to the outside world. In other words, they choose whether to become independent or dependent. These changes in their environment are sometimes confusing, because they are different in the ways they cope with it. Depending on how they cope with these adaptations, they form their own identities. The ways they handle these problems is a premonition on how they will manage themselves. Coping with problems is involved in developing a teenager’s self-esteem.

The study predicts that most of the adolescents interviewed were having low self esteem i.e., 118(56.20%). The study on self-esteem among students by Eidelman, S. & Biernat, M. (2007), and its relationship with raising examination standards was highlighted. This component was also examined by Bong, M., Cho, C., Hyun, S.A. & Hye, J.K (2012) where they studied the relationship student’s self-esteem, among others, and its relationship with academic achievement. The present analysis revealed that students did not have a strong majority of high self-esteem students. It is clear indication that self-esteem can play major role to be positive with life situations, adjustment to the environment. Lack of self-esteem leads to negative feelings where students fail to look for effective abilities, lack of performance in school activities, failures in adjustment.

B. Life Skills among School Going Adolescents:

Social Skills	Boys	Girls	Total
Self Awareness	68	70	65.71
Empathy	47	45	44.28
Interpersonal Skills	48	54	48.57
Communication Skills	42	59	48.09
Critical Thinking	46	44	42.85
Creative Thinking	59	68	60.47
Decision Making	65	63	60
Problem Solving	61	66	60.47
Coping with stress	69	69	65.23
Coping with Situation	51	63	54.28

Table 1.02

Acquiring education is a time for many students to seriously start thinking about the rest of their lives. Adding training on life skills enhances their abilities to look for opportunities, face challenges and positive towards their future.

Sharma (2003) found that 51 per cent of adolescents had 'high level' of life skills and 49 per cent had 'low level of life skills. Gage (1998) found that cultural values and gender roles influence decision making of adolescents. Vasugi and Padma (2008) reported significant difference between boys and girls in their scores on scientific creativity and significant difference in scientific creativity was also found between matriculation and Government /Aided high School students. In this study the score obtained by the students in each of the 10 dimensions of life skills tested are graphically presented above (Table.1.2). The score obtained by the adolescents in each of the 10 dimensions of life skills between girls and boys tested are presented above table. From the table one can see that the scores obtained for self awareness and empathy are higher compared to other dimensions. The score shows that almost 40-70 percent had 'average' of life skills.

C. Life Skills Acquired by Young Students:

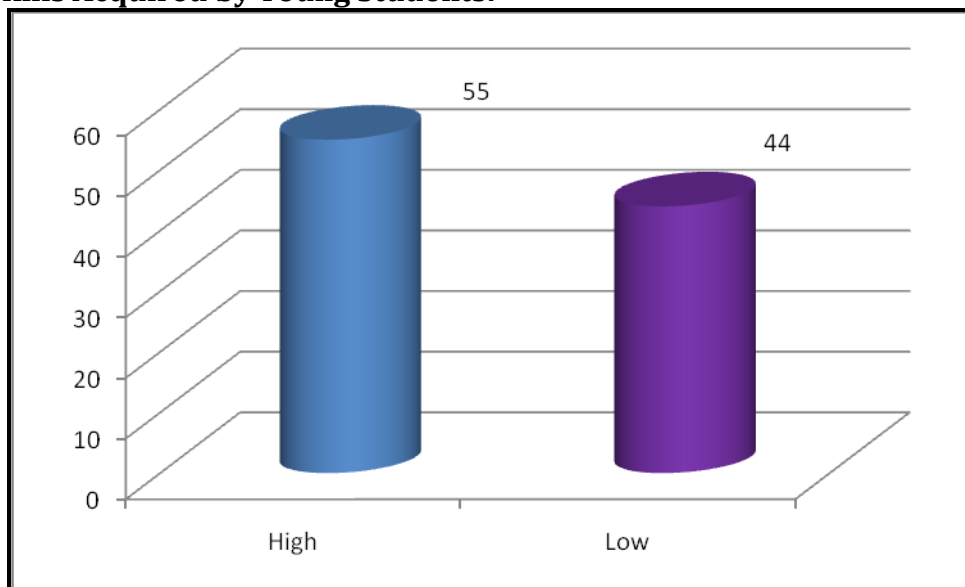


Diagram 2.01

Self - awareness helps young people to understand themselves and establish their personal identity. Elias et al (1991) life skills and skills based health education improves academic performance. Lack of information and skills prevent them from effectively exploring their potential and establishing a positive image and sound career perspective. Study predicts that out of 210 adolescents 116(55%) had life skill scores were termed as having "high level" of life skills and 94(44%) , had "low level" of life skills scores. Life skills include psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make conversant 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 which is essential needs for young people to acquire.

Young people have frequent mood changes sparkly feelings of anger, sadness, happiness, fear, shame, guilt, and love. Very often, they are unable to understand the emotional chaos. Because of lack of supportive environment in order to share their concerns with others and when there are adequate Counseling facilities are not

available in educational institution students often failed to perform well in their academic as well as they became non assertive towards life situations.

D. Association between Self-Esteem and Life Skills Scores among Students:

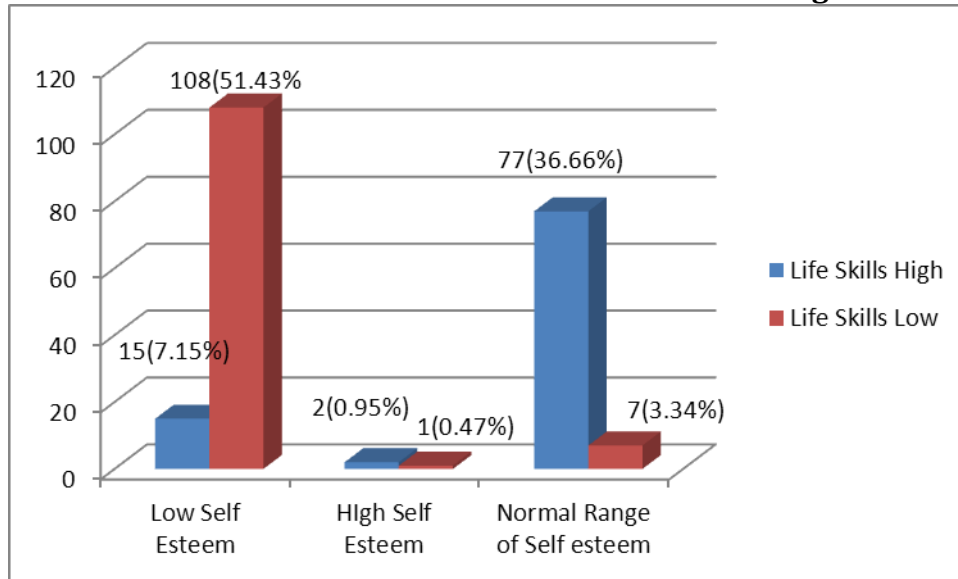


Diagram 2.02

It is found that in the present investigation, there is a significant difference between self-esteem and life-skills scores acquired by students. It shows that those who have low self esteem have low life skills and those who have normal range of self-esteem have high levels of life skills. In a similar study by F. Maleki (2013), results showed that there was a significant correlation between parts of the factors embedded life skills and self-esteem among students which led them to have text anxiety. The results of low self-esteem can be temporary, but in serious cases can lead to various problems including depression, delinquency, self-inflicted injuries, suicide (Battle, 1990; Bhatti, 1992), and anorexia nervosa. Friesenhahn (1999) study also confirm that there is significant difference in the self esteem of adolescents after LST, along with improved ability to interact with others, strengthened communication skills, gain in creative thinking skills, enhanced ability to make their own decisions and manage their resources, and greatly improved their ability to effectively work in groups to accomplish group goals.

Training life skills helps students to build self confidence to face challenges related to school performance, test anxiety, coping emotions and stress etc. Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities, i.e. what to do and how to do it. Life skills are abilities that facilitate individuals to behave in healthy ways, given the desire to do so and given the scope and opportunity to do so. Therefore the results of these studies clearly illustrate life skills training is need based for students to grow intellectually, emotionally and to have positive life.

Tool for Life Skill Education to Students:

Life skills are “abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that helps individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”. Life skills training is an efficacious tool for empowering the youth to act responsibly, take initiative and take control. It is based on the assumption that when young people are able to rise above emotional impassess arising from daily conflicts, entangled relationships and peer pressure, they are less likely to resort to anti social or high risk behaviors.

Life skill education is a value added program which aims to provide students with strategies to make healthy choices that contribute to a meaningful life. It helps adolescents to understand their self and to assess their skills, abilities and areas of development. It also helps adolescents to get along with other people and adjust with their environment and making responsible decision. The main objective of life skill education is to enable the learner to develop a concept of oneself as a person of worth and dignity. Life skill education is a basic learning need for all individuals. Various skills like leadership, responsibility, communication, intellectual capacity, self esteem, Interpersonal skill etc. extends its maximum level, if it is practicing effectively. We need to create life skill education as the cornerstone of various youth programmers and an integral part of our formal education process. The Ten core Life Skills as laid down by WHO are:

- ✓ Self-Awareness
- ✓ Empathy
- ✓ Critical Thinking
- ✓ Creative Thinking
- ✓ Decision Making
- ✓ Problem Solving
- ✓ Effective Communication
- ✓ Interpersonal Relationship
- ✓ Coping With Stress
- ✓ Coping With Emotion

The Tool Prepared on Life Skills for Creative and Positive Social Functioning Among Young Students:

Life skills	Duration	Methods and materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical thinking and creative thinking• Decision making and problem solving• Communication skills and interpersonal relations• Coping with emotions and stress• Self-awareness and empathy	<p>This is 10 hours programme for 20 to 30 young students. Each session can be conducted 2 hours hour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction: 30 minuets• Distribution of materials/ group divisions/rules and regulations of the activities: 15 minutes• Activities and discussions : 1 hour 15 minutes• Evaluation: 40 minutes• Follow up sessions can be conducted according to the timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group Discussion• Group Counseling /Group therapy• Story telling• Case study methods• Cognitive therapy• Materials: Charts and stationary items, storytelling/case study materials• Case study materials can be given related life situations – should help them to learn about problem solving, assertive, emotional balance, exam fear, risk factors, parental conflict, stress management, learn to say 'NO' etc• The methods can be used to facilitate students in small groups and pairs, brainstorming, role play, games and debates.

The Life Skills programme is a school based programme where Life Skills are imparted in a supportive learning environment. They are applicable for all ages of children and adolescents in school. However, the age group targeted is mainly 10-19, adolescent years, since young people seem to be most vulnerable and behavior related health problems. The programme is for the promotion of health and well being and targeted group is all young people.

Benefits of Teaching Life Skills:

Imparting life skill education in young students will bring valuable benefits which include

- ✓ Endorsement of self esteem, peace education, self confidence etc [TACADE,19902]
- ✓ Prevention of antisocial activities and behavior [Botvin et.al. 19843 , Pentz, 19834]
- ✓ Helps in the promotion of general well being and primary prevention[Errecart et al., 19915 ; Perry and Kelder, 19926 ; Caplan et al., 19927]
- ✓ Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities and enable individuals to behave in healthy ways, given the desire to do so and given the scope and opportunity to do so.
- ✓ Results of research studies also prove that life skill education improves the academic performance of individuals [Weissberg et.al. 19898]

Conclusion:

Study assessed that most of the adolescents are having lack of self-esteem and average students acquired life skills Study suggests that implementing adolescent education is mandatory for schools and colleges. It aims to develop awareness and positive attitude towards population and development issues leading to responsible behavior among students and teachers and, indirectly, among parents and the community at large.

One of the major objectives of adolescence education is to develop life skills to empower young people to respond to the real life situations in positive and responsible ways. Life Skills are psycho-social abilities that enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitude and values regarding their concerns into well-informed and healthy behaviors. Empowered with skills; young people are able to take decisions based on a logical process of "*what to do, why to do, how to do and when to do.*"

Methods to improve the psychosocial competence and resilience of the adolescent as health promotional activities and development oriented approach need to be included in the school

Sexual Harassment in public spaces, institutions of education, in and around home and at the workplace is also a well established fact. Child abuse, bullying and ragging are also common and more so among boys. Hence, although India has a vast human resource at its disposal, the country will have to make consistent and substantive investments in the health and well-being of its young people in order to harness their potential.

Collecting and analyzing national statistics in ways that make it easier to understand the needs of young people, their numbers and their use of services. Developing health worker competencies to deal with the special information, clinical and psychosocial needs of adolescent are essential. Methods to improve the psychosocial competence and resilience of the adolescent as health promotional activities and development oriented approach need to be included in the school syllabus and provided as much relevance. Ensuring that the legal and policy environment will

enhances access to the care that adolescents needs. In this regard adding Adolescence Education in the school system of education is right based and essential.

However, education, which is currently prevalent in our country, is achievement oriented than child oriented. It does not address the needs of all the children who in spite of various levels of scholastic competence are capable of learning and need to develop those skills, and become empowered to live effectively in this world. This empowerment is very essential in today's context in India as there is rapid globalization and urbanization with a breaking up of joint families and the traditional support systems. Academic stress, violence including bullying, sexual permissiveness, easy drug availability and abuse, crowding, poor infrastructure, social divide are some of major issues which a youth has to contend with in this rapidly changing social scene of India. An empowered child has the competence to cope with the challenges of life using the available resources even amidst such adversities.

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