

Life skills in relation towards Academic Achievement of senior secondary students in Sikkim.

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Abstract

The present study finds out the Life skills and academic achievement of senior secondary students in Sikkim. Also, the study tends to examine the relationship between Life skills and academic achievement. Present study adopts a quantitative approach. Data was collected using standardized psychometric measurement. Whereas, quantitative analysis of the data was done by using Pearson-correlation, 't' test and ANOVA. Findings of the study suggested that majority of students had average Life skills. Academic achievement of students wasn't up to standard as around 54 percent students scored below 60 percent. It was also found that there is a positive relationship between Life skills and academic achievement of the students.

Keywords- Life Skills, Academic Achievement, Adolescence, Sikkim.

Introduction

Education is the process of all round development of an individual which enables individuals to lead their life efficiently. Though, Education is an extensive and time-consuming process, it is considered a fruitful achievement of an individual. The importance of education can also be seen when humans fail to cope with the day to day life which is caused by the absence of this dynamic movement and society as a whole suffer from these drawbacks. Education is the path which helps in solving the social and cultural problems, provided good and proper education is implemented through systematic and scientific ways that help social, educational improvement of individuals (Tadayoni, 2001). In order to be successful in life, academic achievements also

play an important role in framing how competent an individual becomes or in other words success is related to academic achievements of an individual too. The explosion of knowledge and its application has brought about drastic changes in our lives. Today's lifestyle is more sophisticated than a decade or two ago. The increasing interdependence of the world in the social, economic and political spheres, the use of advanced technology in workplace as well as in domestic life has rendered present-day society very complex. Learning to cope up with the changing pattern of society, accomplish academic achievements and to become successful in life, are the aspects that today's students strive for. The need is to empower them not only financially but also socially, emotionally and psychologically. The 2000 Dakar World Education Conference supported that all young people and adults have the rights to benefit from an education that comprises of learning to know, to do, to live together and to be which includes a combination of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills with a particular emphasis on those skills that related to critical thinking and problem solving, self-management and communication and interpersonal skills.

Education should not only focus on teaching knowledge and values to the students but also should focus in developing different skills which will help them in understanding more about themselves, their characteristic, and their mental health. Lack of such skills would lead the students to stressful journey of academics, abnormal behavior or mental disorder. To prevent the students to get away with stressful troubles through ineffective and maladaptive behavior, Life Skills is essential in their life to fulfill their academic goals through achieving improvements and their sustaining performance in educational setting. Life skills prepare the learners in developing their skills and practical knowledge to sustain their academic achievement.

Life Skills

Life skills have been defined as "the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO, 1999). 'Adaptive' means that a person's ability in flexible approach and can adjust in any circumstances. 'Positive behavior' implies that a person is looking forward and can find a solution in difficult situations and opportunities to adjust accordingly in life. UNICEF (2012) also explains that life

skill as "a behavior change or behavior development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: Knowledge, attitude and skills". In particular, life skills are composed of various groups of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help an individual in making decisions, problems solving, critically and creatively thinking, communicating effectively, building healthy relationships, empathizing with others, and coping with and managing their lives healthily and productively. There are many such skills, but core life skills which were laid down by WHO (1999) include- self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, problem-solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationship, coping with stress, coping with emotion.

Academic Achievement-

Academic Achievement is referred to as the level of proficiency attained in academic work or formally acquired knowledge in school subjects which is often represented by the percentage of marks or grades obtained by students in annual examination. It also refers to the manifestation of the position of student academic achievement. It is a quantitative analysis of school learning of individual that is measured by different tests. therefore, it can be referred to the amount of learning that has been taken place through the process of teaching which are measured by various academic tests. Based on the progress made by the students, one can be judged and decide whether the students are good or not.

Review of Literature

The World Health Organization (1999) has suggested that life skills are important for healthy development and preparing adolescents for future. Botvin (1985) in his study based on Life Skills Training Program, had incorporated in a curriculum to teach a wide range of personal and social skills to improve youth's general competence and reduce potential motivations for substance abuse. After participating in the training programme, the student's assertiveness, social anxiety, self-esteem, decision-making and social coping skills was developed.

Khale, Dayalchand and Kurz (1999) studied the impact of Life Skills Education on adolescent girls where it was reported that children showed better performance in 12 of the 15 skill areas.

Studies have been conducted on the relationship between life skills and academic achievement. (Savoji, Ganji and Ahmad Zade, 2009) in their study showed that teaching Life skills has a positive role and significant effect on motivating progress and students' academic achievement. According to Handy (2003), students fail because of inadequate preparedness, inappropriate study habits, and unproductive exam anxiety. Palmer and Chalmers (1990) contend that students fail because of ineffective study methods, because they do not know how to write examinations, and because they do not do enough work. Life skills training aims to get the students to think about the skills they need to cope as undergraduates

Powney, Lowden and Hall (2000) did an effort to see that which life skills were considered important by Scottish and English young people? It was found that communication and interpersonal skills were considered more important. Problem solving and critical thinking have important role in solving any problem.

A study was conducted by Varshney and Singh (2002) to ascertain the effectiveness of the stress management intervention programme in reducing the degree of stress amongst class nine students and thereby to reduce anxiety, and improving the coping skills and academic performance.

Smith (2004) showed that life skills training significantly improved interpersonal relationship and the reduction of aggression and behavioral problems in instructed people. And also, had a significant effect on management and leadership abilities among young people. It also helped an individual in controlling problems such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, rejection, diffidence, anger, conflicts in interpersonal relationship lack and failure. Venkatesh (2009) stated that there is an acute need of implementing the life skill education which are necessarily for both students and teachers to enhance the learning abilities of children and also to make the classroom environment more learning friendly.

Sibal (2009) in the Report by Ministry of HRD Government of India on CCE (Continuous and comprehensive Evaluation) System incorporated by CBSE all over India, laid down great emphasis on life skills and should be included in the curriculum as these will equip students with

life skills especially Creative and Critical Thinking Skills, Social Skills and Coping Skills which will keep them in good stead when they enter into a highly competitive environment later on.

Geeta (2011) in her study underlined the fact that it is high time to implement Life Skills training as the core component of the present curriculum at school level. The teachers as well as the students should be encouraged to participate in such skills training programs with great enthusiasm.

Jayachithra, (2015) concluded that Teaching Performance, Stress Management, Frustration Management and Conflict Resolution, facilitate Emotional Intelligence which in-turn, facilitates Life skills.

Halawah (2006) also examined the effect of motivation, family environment, and student characteristics on academic achievement. The results revealed no significant gender difference in academic achievement of the students. Preiss and Franova (2006) also analyzed the relationship between depressive symptoms, academic achievement and intelligence, where it was found that there was no gender difference in academic achievement of boys and girls (Kaur, 2011).

Fallahchai (2012) in his study entitled Effectiveness of Academic and Life Skills Instruction on the Freshmen Academic Achievement 'examined the effectiveness of instruction of academic and life skills on the freshmen academic achievement. Life skills programs had improved the pro-social behaviour and also helped in decreasing alcohol intake, drug abuse, tobacco use and smoking, law-breaking behaviour, aggression and suicide. Life skill training is a successful tool for empowering the children to act maturely, take initiative and able to take control.

Yellaiah (2012) in the study found that adjustment and academic achievement cause significant differences between male and female students and rural urban school students do not cause any significant difference between academic achievements and adjustments.

Sheikhzade and Bookani (2013) studied the life skills training has influence on the students' educational achievements. Similar study by Savoji, Ganji, and Ahmadzadeh (2013) found that the life skill training program had positive effect on achievement motivation and academic achievement of students and no significant difference was observed between girls and boys.

Justification of the study

In the school years, challenging factors faced by the students includes depression, anxiety, and lack of ability to understand the content and behavioral problems. Studies have concluded that life skills play an important role in protecting them from their difficulties and promoting mental health and competence among learners. Each learner is unique and their needs are different from others, Life skills help in building confidence and positive values within the learners to communicate and collaborate among each other and shape their behavior accordingly. It helps to transform the learners' knowledge across the boundaries. The present study is being conducted in order to understand the of level of life skills and academic achievements among the senior secondary students of Sikkim and also attempts to understand how life skills effect the academic achievement of students in Sikkim. Since the students who are an easy victim of depression, stress cannot cope up with the day to day activities which leads to low academic achievements, divert their attention to other negative activities and finally drops out from the schools. Life skills help adolescence transit successfully from childhood to adulthood and lead to the healthy development of emotional and social skills. It leads to the development of social competence and problem-solving. They can analyze the situation and then form the opinion on their own, not going with the group. Also, they can make balanced decisions that help in both personal and professional lives. It raises their self-esteem and control management and makes them reflect on their actions. (Kawalekar, 2017). In this study, the researcher proposed to find out the relationship between life skills and academic achievement of senior secondary schools with special reference to the state of Sikkim.

Objectives of the study-

The major objectives of the present study will be as follows-

1. To study the level of Life Skills among senior secondary school students of Sikkim.
2. To study the level of Academic Achievements of senior secondary students of Sikkim.
3. To study the level of Life Skills among senior secondary school students of Sikkim with respect to their;
 - a) Sex,
 - b) Family Income,

- c) Locale,
4. To find out the relationship between life skills on academic achievements of senior secondary students of Sikkim.

Design of the study**Population and sample;**

All the senior secondary school students of Sikkim constitute the population for the present study. The present study adopts a quantitative approach. As per the Human Resource Development Department, Government of Sikkim (2016), the total enrollment of the students in 79 senior secondary schools of Sikkim was 14795. Out of which 726 students were selected from 23 senior secondary schools through a stratified random sampling method. Whereas, quantitative analysis of the data was done by using Pearson-correlation, 't' test and ANOVA.

Tools used;

Following tools were used to collect data from the students of higher secondary students of Sikkim.

1. The Life Skills Assessment Scale (2014) constructed by Dr. R. Subashree and Dr. A. Radhakrishnan Nair.
2. Marks obtained by the students in Class 11th and 12th final examination was considered as the academic achievement of students.

Analysis and interpretation of data:

Objective 1- To study the level of Life Skills among senior secondary school students of Sikkim.

Table 1; Level of Life Skills among Senior Secondary School Students of Sikkim

Classification	Norms	No of Students	Percentage of Students
Very High	Above 417	88	12.1%
High	387-417	142	20.0%
Average	325-386	362	49.9%
Low	293-324	96	13.2%
Very Low	Below 293	38	5.2%
		726	100%

From the above table 1, it was found that 12.10 percent of the students who scored above 417 possessed very high Life Skills, 20 percent of the students who scored between 387 to 417 had high life skills. However, majority (49%) of the student had average Life Skills. The findings of the study were similar to studies of Devi, S. (2017), Awasthi & Kumari (2012), Bindu & John (2011) where the majority of the sample had an average level of Life Skills. 13.20 percent and 5.20 percent of the student had a low and very low level of life skills respectively. Comparatively, the students had a less percentage of high and very high level of life skills while the majority of the students had average Life skills which indicates that still lots of works has to be done in order to increase the levels of Life Skills of students.

Table 2; Dimension wise level of Life Skills among senior secondary students of Sikkim (in percentage).

		Self-awareness	Empathy	Effective Communication	Interpersonal Relationship	Creative Thinking	Critical Thinking	Decision Making	Problem Solving	Coping with Emotions	Coping with Stress
Life Skills	Very low	7.3	4.1	3.3	5.0	1.1	9.9	3.7	2.3	.8	9
	Low	14.2	19.9	2.9	14.9	17.6	20.6	19.3	14.0	8.5	1.8
	Average	45.7	56.4	41.0	58.2	60.7	60.4	53.8	50.1	60.5	41.0
	High	18.3	16.5	37.4	16.2	14.9	8.1	16.0	18.7	20.8	32.3
	Very High	14.4	2.9	15.3	5.6	5.6	.8	7.2	14.7	9.2	15.8
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

It was revealed from the table 2 that majority of the students of senior secondary school of Sikkim had average Life Skills in all the ten components as per guidelines laid down by WHO (1999), except in the effective communication and coping with stress, the students had high and very high level with 52.7 percent 48.1 percent respectively, this indicates that the students was capable enough to cope with day to day stress and can communicate effectively with their peer groups and others. However, the students were lacking behind in some of the important skills which needed immediate attention that includes Self-awareness, Empathy, Interpersonal relationships and Critical thinking with 21.5 percent, 24 percent, 19.9 percent, and 30.5 percent respectively

Objective 2-To study the level of academic achievements of senior secondary students of Sikkim

Table 3: Levels of academic achievements of senior secondary school students.

	Category	Range (in percentage)	Frequency	Percentage
Academic Achievement	1st Division	Above 60%	337	46.4
	2nd Division	45%-59%	298	41
	Promoted	34%-44%	75	10.3
	Fail	Below 33%	16	2.2
	Total		726	100

From table 3, it was found that 2.2 percent of the students failed in their examination securing less than 33 percent. Similarly, 10.3 percent of the students were just promoted to the next class, 41.0 percent of the students had scored 2nd division which ranged from 45% to 59%. Whereas, the majority of the students had secured 1st division in their end term examination of class 11 and 12 respectively.

Objective 3- To study the level of Life Skills among senior secondary school students of Sikkim with respect to their;

- a) Sex,
- b) Family Income,
- c) Locale,

Hypothesis 1.- *There is no significant difference regarding the life skills of senior secondary students based on their sex.*

Table 4; Comparison of Life Skills among male and female students of Sikkim.

Gender		N	Mean	S.D	Mean Difference	Computed t-value	Table t-value	df	Sig
Lifeskills	Male	363	365.17	45.09	1.81	0.553	1.96	724	N.S
	Female	363	363.36	43					

Table 4 revealed that the mean scores of male students in life skills were 365.17 with an SD of 45.09 whereas the mean score of female students in Life Skills was 363.36 with an SD of 43.00 which indicate that male level of life skills was better than the female level of life skills.

In order to find out the difference in Life Skills among senior secondary school students of Sikkim with respect to their Sex, the computed *t* value was 0.553 which was less than table *t* value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance which proved that the Null Hypothesis was accepted, it showed that there was no significant difference in respect to their gender in regards to Life skills among senior secondary school students. This indicates that the studies conducted had statistical evidence in support of the idea that gender does not play a role in determining the level of Life Skills between the students of the senior secondary school of Sikkim. The findings of the study were similar to the findings of Kalaiselvi(2016), B.David, Shiny John (2011), T. Yankey(2011). Savoji, Ganji and Ahmad Zade' (2010) where male and female students do not differ in terms of life skills.

Hypothesis 2.- *There is no significant difference regarding the life skills of senior secondary students based on their family income.*

Table 5; Significance level of Life Skills with respect to their family income.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Calculated F value	Table F value	Sig.
Between Groups	3366.995	2	1683.5			
Within Groups	1402537.16	723	1939.9	0.868	3.01	N.S
Total	1405904.16	725				

The above table 5 comprised of calculation of One-Way ANOVA between life skills and family income where it was found that the computed F value was .868 which was less than table F value (df 2/723) 3.01 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference regarding the life skills of senior secondary students based on their family income was accepted and can be stated that income of the family does not influence life skills of senior secondary students of Sikkim. The findings of the study were supported by the studies conducted by Jeyanti (2004), J.Vijayarani, Geeta (2017).

Hypothesis 3.- *There is no significant difference regarding the life skills of Senior secondary students based on their Locale.*

Table 6; Comparison of Life Skills among rural and urban students of Sikkim.

Life skills	Locale	N	Mean	S.D	Mean Difference	Computed t-value	Table t-value	df	Sig.
	Rural	537	365.77	43.9	5.77	1.55	1.96	724	N.S
	Urban	189	360	44.27					

On perusal of Table 6, it was observed that the mean scores of rural students were found to be 365.77 with an SD of 43.90 which was slightly higher than the mean score of urban students which was found to be 360.00 with an SD of 44.27. Looking at the table it can conclude that there is not much difference in mean score between rural and urban students of Sikkim.

The following null hypothesis was formulated for testing if there was any significant difference in regarding life skills of Senior secondary students based on their locale. The test of significance of the difference between means of two samples was calculated and tested for the difference where it was found out that the computed t value which was 1.55 was less than the table t value of 1.96 at 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. It indicates that locale does not influence life skills between the students of the senior secondary school of Sikkim which was similar to the findings of Kalaiselvi (2016).

Objective 4-To assess the relationship between life skills on academic achievements of senior secondary students of Sikkim

Hypothesis 4-*There is no significant relationship between life skills and academic achievements of senior secondary students of Sikkim.*

To understand the two aspects of the relationship between life skills on academic achievements of senior secondary students of Sikkim, Pearson's correlation was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. The following calculation was made which is shown in the table below.

Table 7; Correlation between life skills and academic achievements of senior secondary school students of Sikkim.

		Life skills	Academic Achievement
Life skills	Pearson Correlation	1	.726**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0
	N	726	726
Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.726**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	
	N	726	726

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 shows that a correlation of .726 was found between Life skills and academic achievements of senior secondary school students in Sikkim. Since .726 indicates that the correlation coefficient was significant at 0.01 level. It was found through statistical evidence that there exists a positive relation between Life skills and academic achievements of senior secondary school students of Sikkim. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating "there is no significant relationship between life skills and academic achievements of senior secondary students of Sikkim" was rejected at 0.01 level of significance. It was further interpreted that the life skills of the students can positively influence the academic achievements of senior secondary school students of Sikkim. The results of this study between the relationship of life skills and academic achievement were supported by the results of Savoji, Ganji and Ahmad Zade (2010), Joshi (2014), Abdi and Rasol (2015) studies who have acknowledged the relationship between life skills and academic achievement.

Major findings and Discussion

- The study found that 49.90 percent of the students' life skills were found out to be on average level. Only 12.10 percent and 20 percent of the students had very high and high life skills respectively. Looking at the finding, it can be assumed that still more efforts in regards to life skills education should be encouraged in these schools as life skills education is not imparted in schools, more programs related to the development and growth of Life Skills among students should be focused and inculcate in the curriculum, this will not only help the students at large but also helps in grooming their skills but will certainly develop their capabilities and abilities in living their life successfully.
- Out of ten core life skills laid down by WHO (1999), students score in effective communication and coping with stress were found to be satisfactory. However, the students had a low score on Self-awareness, Empathy, Interpersonal relationships, and Critical thinking. These skills are also important for the development of the students, attention should be focused in these areas for harmonious growth of the child where every skills are needed to cope up with competitive and challenging society.

- Gender, Family income, Locale does not influence the level of Life Skills among the students of the senior secondary school of Sikkim.
- There was a positive relation between Life skills and academic achievements of senior secondary school students of Sikkim. Cognitive achievement and life skills are strongly interdependent, with academic achievement relying heavily on abilities like self-discipline and motivation Duckworth & Seligman (2005) there are several behaviors, skills, attitudes, and strategies - beyond content knowledge and academic skill - necessary for sustained and significant improvements in learning outcomes Farrington et al. (2011). It is evident from the fact that psycho-social competencies, such as resilience, self-esteem, and problem-solving are vital in helping children move up.

Sikkim, like other states of India is undergoing drastic changes in every sphere of life making it a much more complicated society than before. Adolescence are the victims of different circumstances that is being placed in their life, not everyone has the abilities to handle the situation making it a direct negative impact on their behavior who cannot cope with it. Hence, it is necessary to implement Life Skills training as the core component of the present curriculum at different levels of schools in Sikkim also. The students need proper exposure in developing their life skills where life skills education should be imparted in schools which in turn has a direct impact on their life. They should be motivated in order to participate in such skills training programme with great enthusiasm and should continue for longer period of time in order to produce more valid results. Life Skill development is a key factor to facilitate the process of transforming information into healthy behaviour making a direct impact on their academic performance and positivity of life. As per the World Bank's SABER and UNICEF, the current status of life skills education is found to be just emerging where their policies of life skills are on the ways to meeting minimum standard, Curricular modules designed and developed for teacher, teacher educator, student use are in emerging phase, Learning/quality goals (Mechanisms in place to ensure the quality of life skills delivery) and Contextual evidence body (Evidence base on impact of life skills education interventions in Indian context) are Absent (no or limited progress). Still, a long way to go but looking at the progress in recent years, the day will certainly come when life skills education is mandatorily imparted in school programs as Life

skill facilitates complete and integrated development of individuals to function effectively as social beings.

Conclusion

It is evident from the study that Life skills are those which will help an individual to adjust in their day to day complexities of their life and improve their academic achievements. Different programs of life skills should be inculcated in the curriculum and implemented throughout the state of Sikkim as early as possible. It is the foundation of skills that an individual possesses and helps in determining their life as per their life skills, therefore making it the necessities of life to survive. It will help young people to empower in challenging situations. It would be a way of empowering youth to build their lives and their dreams. It would be a means of handholding them through the critical stages in their lives and helping them tap their potential to the fullest. Thereby, it is hoped that the current education system with its oppressive rigidity would open up and make life skills education a part of its mainstream curriculum. This would enable the country to build individuals who believe in themselves, who are efficient leaders and administrators, who can understand their potentials and achieve them.

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