

Vol 2 Issue 7 April 2013

ISSN No : 2249-894X

*Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal*

*Review Of
Research Journal*

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2249-894X

Review Of Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial Board readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

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AN IMPACT OF CO-SCHOLASTIC DOMAIN ON SCHOLASTIC DOMAINS AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

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Abstract:

Central Board Of Secondary Education (CBSE) had been emphasizing education of students at secondary level, that is, grades IX and X, by developing their ten core Life Skills called self-awareness; empathy; critical thinking; creative thinking; decision making; problem solving; effective communication; interpersonal relationship; coping with stress and coping with emotion along with linking it to its scheme of comprehensive and continuous evaluation (CCE) in the formative evaluation format. The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of instruction of academic and life skills on the Senior Secondary students. The research procedure was semi-experimental with pre-test and post-test design with a control group. The statistical sample included 50 students of standard XI were randomly selected and assigned in experimental and control groups. The instruments were Life skills inventory, average grade first term, and demographic questions. The experimental group attended in 16 weekly sessions (35 hours) of academic and life skills training. The results showed that the students who had received academic and life skills training gained significantly higher scores in life skills and academic achievement than those with no training. Also, not significant different between male and female students in the score of life skills and academic achievement observed. It seems that assessing and meeting student's life skills and academic achievement needs, especially in the first year of their study is very essential.

KEY WORDS:

academic skills, life skills, students, academic achievement.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence, a vital stage of growth and development, marks the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. It is characterized by rapid physiological changes and psychosocial maturation. Adolescence is also the stage when young people extend their relationships beyond parents and family and are intensely influenced by their peers and the outside world in general. As adolescents mature cognitively, their mental process becomes more analytical. They are now capable of abstract thinking, better articulation and of developing an independent ideology. These are truly the years of creativity, idealism, buoyancy and a spirit of adventure. But these are also the years of experimentation and risk-taking, of giving in to negative peer pressure, of taking uninformed decisions on crucial issues, especially relating to their bodies and their sexuality. Adolescence is thus a turning point in one's life, a period of increased potential but also one of greater vulnerability.

Title: AN IMPACT OF CO-SCHOLASTIC DOMAIN ON SCHOLASTIC DOMAINS AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS
Source: Review of Research [2249-894X] PRASHANT THOTE , L.MATHEW AND D.P.S. ATHOURE yr:2013 vol:2 iss:7

KEY ISSUES & CONCERNS OF ADOLESCENTS' STUDENTS

Developing an Identity

Self – awareness helps adolescents understand themselves and establish their personal identity. Lack of information and skills prevent them from effectively exploring their potential and establishing a positive image and sound career perspective.

Managing Emotions

Adolescents have frequent mood changes reflecting feelings of anger, sadness, happiness, fear, shame, guilt, and love. Very often, they are unable to understand the emotional turmoil. They do not have a supportive environment in order to share their concerns with others Counseling facilities are not available.

Building Relationships

As a part of growing up, adolescents redefine their relationships with parents, peers and members of the opposite sex. Adults have high expectations from them and do not understand their feelings. Adolescents need social skills for building positive and healthy relationships with others including peer of opposite sex. They need to understand the importance of mutual respect and socially defined boundaries of every relationship.

Resisting Peer Pressure

Adolescents find it difficult to resist peer pressure. Some of them may yield to these pressures and engage in experimentation. Aggressive self conduct; irresponsible behaviour and substance abuse involve greater risks with regard to physical and mental health. The experiment with smoking and milder drugs can lead to switching over to hard drugs and addiction at a later stage.

Acquiring Information, Education and Services on issues of Adolescence

Exposure to media and mixed messages from the fast changing world has left adolescents with many unanswered questions. The widening gap in communication between adolescents and parents is a matter of great concern. Teachers still feel inhibited to discuss issues frankly and sensitively. Adolescents seek information from their peer group who are also ill informed and some may fall prey to quacks. Fear and hesitation prevents them from seeking knowledge on preventive methods and medical help if suffering from RTIs and STIs.

Communicating and Negotiating safer life situations

Sexually active adolescents face greater health risks. Girls may also face mental and emotional problems related to early sexual initiation. Resisting the vulnerability to drug abuse, violence and conflict with law or society.

Understanding Life Skills – A Teacher's prospective

Life skills have been defined as “the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (WHO). 'Adaptive' means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. 'Positive behaviour' implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions. The terms 'Livelihood skills' or occupational/vocational skills refer to capabilities, resources and opportunities to pursue individual and household economic goals and relate to income generation. Thus, Life skills are distinct from livelihood skills.

Key Life Skills

Life skills include psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed 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. Essentially, there are two kinds of skills - those related to thinking termed as "thinking skills"; and skills related to dealing with others termed as "social skills". While thinking skills relate to reflection at a personal level, social skills include interpersonal skills and do not necessarily depend on logical thinking. It is the combination of these two types of skills that are needed for achieving assertive behaviour and negotiating effectively. "Emotional" can be perceived as a skill not only in making rational decisions but also in being able to make others agree to one's point of view. To do that, coming to terms first with oneself is important. Thus, self management is an important skill including managing/coping with feelings, emotions, stress and resisting peer and family pressure. Young people as advocates need both thinking and social skills for consensus building and advocacy on issues of concern.

The Ten core Life Skills as laid down by WHO are:

1. Self-awareness
2. Empathy
3. Critical thinking
4. Creative thinking
5. Decision making
6. Problem Solving
7. Effective communication
8. Interpersonal relationship
9. Coping with stress
10. Coping with emotion

Self-awareness includes recognition of 'self', our character, 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 often a prerequisite to effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy with others.

Empathy - To have a successful relationship with our loved ones and society at large, we need to understand and care about other peoples' needs, desires and feelings. Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person. Without empathy, our communication with others will amount to one-way traffic. Worst, we will be acting and behaving according to our self-interest and are bound to run into problems. No man is an island, no woman either! We grow up in relationships with many people – parents, brothers and sisters, cousins, uncles and aunts, classmates, friends and neighbours. When we understand ourselves as well as others, we are better prepared to communicate our needs and desires. We will be more equipped to say what we want people to know, present our thoughts and ideas and tackle delicate issues without offending other people. At the same time, we will be able to elicit support from others, and win their understanding. Empathy can help us to accept others, who may be very different from ourselves. This can improve social interactions, especially, in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity. 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.

Critical thinking is an ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behaviour, such as values, peer pressure and the media.

Decision making helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health. It can teach people how to actively make decisions about their actions in relation to healthy assessment of different options and, what effects these different decisions are likely to have.

Problem solving helps 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.

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

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, and also needs and fears. And it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.

Coping with stress means recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help us control our levels of stress, by changing our environment or lifestyle and learning how to relax.

Coping with emotions means involving recognizing emotions within us and others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions like anger or sadness can have negative effects on our health if we do not respond appropriately

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using empirical methods which in turn employed the model “pretest and post test with experimental and control groups 50 students of standers XI studying chemistry subject of the academic year 2012-13 were selected .The sample size was determined at confidence intervals (CI) of 95% .Power of the statistical testing was $P_1 = 5\%$, 80% and $P_2 = 27\%$.Samples were randomly chosen and stratified through a multistage procedures .Sampling procedures first begin with randomly willing to participate were chosen. Having been partially stratified, subjects were placed into two groups of experimental (25) and control (25) .the stratification variables were gender, age and stream of the study.

In general, the examination consisted of three stages: administering pretest, applying experimental variables, and administering post-test. The experimental variable was defined as teaching academic study and life skills including introduction to the related educational program, principles of reading and learning methods, note-taking techniques, memory recollection at exams, cognitive self-conscious acquisition, anger management skills, stress coping strategies, decision making and problem solving, communication skills, creative and critical thinking. Throughout the examination process, all the members of the experimental group were first trained in sessions of 90 to 120 minutes for 9 weeks, and finally, post-test was administered for both experimental and control groups.

Table-1 Comparison of experimental and control groups in terms of performance and educational progress

Semester	Groups	N	M	SD	DF	“t” value
First	Experimental	25	15.58	2.36	168	3.28
	Control	25	14.05	2.29		
Second	Experimental	25	15.47	2.10	168	3.56
	Control	25	15.88	3.11		

Table-2 Comparison between experimental and control groups with a view to HOTS

Variables	Changes	SS	DF	MS	F
HOTS	Pre test Groups	152.09	1	152.09	65.74***
		349.49	1	349.49	141.98***

* $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.01$

Life skills questionnaire was developed by authors of this paper based on length scale and according to several aspects of life skills recommended by the World Health Organization(WHO) including: Decision-making and problem-solving abilities; Creative thinking ability; Critical thinking ability; Interpersonal relationships and effective communication abilities; Cognitive self-conscious ability; Empathy skills; Emotions and anger management; Stress coping ability .

In order to evaluate and obtain face validity, the questionnaire was submitted to three university professor's s. Next, in order to obtain reliability, questionnaires were distributed among 40 students and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was measured, result of which was 0.84 for total items of the questionnaire. The highest reliability coefficient was 0.94 for effective communication subscale, and the lowest level was 0.74 for stress coping ability. Data from the present study were gathered and analyzed using the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS16).

Preliminary analyses were conducted to determine whether there were any differences between the two groups on Life skills. All of students who participated in the study, Life skills questionnaire was administrated. One Way Analysis of Variance ANOVA was utilized to find whether the selected groups were almost homogenous. To do this, their scores in pretest of were used. The ANOVA analysis did not show any significant effect for the test. The result shows, F ratio (0.51) doesn't exceed the F critical value

(2.65) on the 0.05 level of the significance. This implies that there is no significant difference two groups were almost homogenous. To examine the effect of the independent variables, t-test and analysis of covariance was used in order to examine the signification of difference between experimental and control groups in terms of academic achievement and life skills.

As the above table shows, the mean Grade Point Average (GPA) of experimental group was higher than that of control group. The result of statistical testing showed the two mean GPAs are significantly different and are unlikely to have occurred by chance. Therefore, the first hypothesis of the present research (suggesting that academic achievement of newcomer students who participated in the educational program of academic and life skills performed much better than students who never passed the program) is approved.

The results of data analysis show that the statistical analysis using T-test showed that progress rate of the experimental group both in the first and second semester of academic year was much higher than the control group, which was significantly different at $P < 0.001$. In other words, teaching study and life skills improved the progress of experimental group. The result is consistent with Turner's findings, Zhao & Kuh, Kuo et al. that point out those skills and abilities in students are crucial for successful performance at university and suggest that a range of social and educational skills are vital for academic success. Essential courses on educational and life skills offered to students would help them easier adapt with requirements of university life and eventually move away from chances of failure towards achievement and prosperous graduation.

The statistical results obtained from analysis of covariance testing showed the educational program was significant ($P < 0.0001$) after controlling the effects of pretest, i.e. teaching students life skills was effective on their knowledge and grades. It can be stated that subjects were different in their knowledge of the skills and abilities before the educational program was offered, In fact, they were balanced to the same level of the examined proficiency employing analysis of covariance, and then the effects of the educational program on students' knowledge of the skills was evaluated, which proved positively effective according to the results shown in the table above. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis of the research is approved and findings are consistent with the results obtained by O'Connor et al., avoiding risky behaviors; Sumyung & Namhee, better adaptability of students; higher grades in life skills exams; Aghajani improved mental health. Knowledge of suitable life skills would provide an opportunity for individuals to act normally in their daily life and effortlessly and positively conform to social environment and culture when dealing with other people. In addition, life skills would help individuals boost their level of adaptability and psychological capacity.

In a situation where young students benefit from life skills, they take responsibility for their well-being, make healthy decisions, and generally lead a safe and sound lifestyle throughout adolescence and adulthood, which ultimately enables them to perform taking advantage of their potentials and become prepared to encounter future needs and changes. Lack of information about appropriate lifestyles endangers students' health, i.e. poor life and social skills would bring about mental illness and social problems, fault of which is mainly found with parents and pre-university schools that fail to adequately educate students. According to Darren & Gazda life skills are essential for a productive life and should be promoted throughout every age span, including childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to only 50 subjects, in order to get in depth it can be broadened by selecting higher sample size. So suggesting the future implementation of the study it should be repeated with larger sample. The biggest limitation was that some students consulted with each other while making their choice. So the result might have got affected due to this.

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