

FACILITATING MARGINALIZED STUDENTS THROUGH LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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Abstract

Life skills play a significant role in dealing with our daily chores. Cognitive life skills are higher order skills and are interconnected with other skills. It is important to enhance these life skills among school students specially students from low- socio- economic background. The present paper attempts to examine the decision making skill of students from low- socio economic backgrounds (Marginalized) of eighth standard from SSC board. The study adopted a two stage sampling technique. The total sample for the study was 320 students studying in eighth standard were selected from aided school in Mumbai city. The methodology of the present study was of an experiment type. The study adopted a quasi-experimental design of the pre-test- post-test, non-equivalent groups. The paper consists of two parts quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data. The intervention programme included lessons on decision- making skill. The statistical technique used for the quantitative data analysis was ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance). The qualitative data analysis included the focused group interviews. The findings of the study shows that there is a significant difference in the post – test scores students on their decision making of control and experimental group after partialling out the effect of pre-test scores. The mean scores of experimental group are significantly higher than the mean scores of control group. The Life Skills Education Programme was effective in enhancing decision making of marginalized students. The effect size of the treatment on decision making was small. The qualitative data gives the views and opinion of students about the programme. The students liked and appreciated the programme. The activities helped the students to understand the decision making wheel and how it can be used in daily life to make decisions.

Keywords: Life skills education programme, decision making skill, low- socio- economic status, marginalized students

1. INTRODUCTION

The cycle of skill development starts with defining and promoting specific skills, acquisition and fostering of necessary skills among the adolescents. In real life, people often make choices out of habit or tradition, without going through the decision-making steps systematically. Adolescents are considered to be the most

productive members of the society. Global and societal changes have influenced them to a great extent. Adolescence is a "time of increased pressure for problem solving and personal decision (Worell & Danner, 1989, p. 3). Adolescence is a time when important decisions are taken on little life experience and these decisions have lifelong consequences. Therefore, it is essential to enhance effective decision making skills in them. They need to be wise to make and take appropriate decisions in their lives. It is important to provide them with education that brings up the capacity of being effective, ability to deal with defeating problems, objective and rational approaches to the problem. Decision making ability is required to survive in a globalized world.

2. NEED OF THE STUDY

Decision making ability is an essential aspect of optimal adolescent development. It is necessary for adolescents to be given the opportunity to practice making personally meaningful choices if they are to be effective decision makers (Jacobs & Ganzel, 1993). Adolescents from low – socio economic background lack experience and opportunities to understand the steps and significance of decision making. Life skills Education can be a tool to enhance the ability to make and take decisions effectively. The education system is lopped sided and lays importance on academic development and not skill development. These students require academic enrichment as the syllabus does not cover it effectively. They lack exposure to a variety of activities which are not covered while teaching in the classroom. Therefore the researcher developed a programme on Life Skills Education Programme (Cognitive Skills) for the marginalized adolescence students.

3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In the present study prior researches were explored by the researcher in the area of Cognitive life skills education programme (decision making).

Bednar, E. D. & Fisher, T. D. (2003) conducted a study on peer referencing in adolescent decision making as a function of perceived parenting style. This study examined the relationship between parenting style and adolescent decision making. Two hundred sixty-two college students completed a decision-making scale as well as a parenting scale in an effort to determine if the child rearing style of their parents was related to the tendency of these late adolescents to reference peers rather than parents or other adults in decision making. The results indicated that adolescents raised by authoritative parents tended to refer to their parents for moral and informational decisions, while adolescents raised by authoritarian, permissive, or neglecting-rejecting parents more often referenced to their peers for social decisions regardless of how they were raised. Parental responsiveness was a significant factor in determining the source of adolescent decision making assistance, but parental demandingness was not. It was concluded that less orientation toward peers during late adolescence seems to be another advantage of authoritative parenting.

Brown, J., Abdallah, S.S., Ng, R. (2011) conducted a study on decision making styles East and West: Is it time to move beyond cross-cultural research. Cultural differences in decision making styles were explored using the conflict model of decision making (Janis and Mann, 1977). A country analysis indicated that these results were significant for the Australian and the Malaysian sample only. These results are discussed in terms of cultural differences, some of which are reflected in the Hofstede (2001) comparison of cultures on beliefs, values, and behaviours. Further research is suggested that may reflect aspects of the global shift towards more common patterns of thinking across culture, which is influenced by access to media and internet information, as well as increased travel and commerce in an attempt to understand how local decisions may have global impacts. Implications of this research suggest that culture may be too broad a concept and that other more sensitive variable should be examined when conducting cross-cultural research.

Parvathy V and R.R Pillai (2015) conducted a study on the impact of life skills education on adolescents in rural school. The major objective of the study is to analyse the knowledge of life skills among adolescents and the impact of „life skills education training on their knowledge level. The study has revealed significant impact of Life Skills Education training on adolescents. The conclusion of the study was that this study opens up arena to conduct more research in this field with modifications and contextualization of training modules. Contextualization needs to cater the needs of the target group especially when it comes to the backward sections of the community.

Dhingra and Chauhan (2017) conducted a study on assessment of life-skills of adolescents in relation to selected variables. The present research was undertaken with the following objectives: To assess the life-skills of the selected adolescents and to determine the variation in their life-skills with their SES and education of parents. School going boys and girls (14-16 years) of classes VII, IX & X were randomly

selected from randomly selected schools of five Zones of Delhi Municipal council. On statistical analysis it was found that Sample adolescents had average level of life skills. Dimension wise analysis revealed that they scored least in the dimension of coping with stress, pointing to the need for more emphasis on acquisition of this skill to deal with the ever demanding requirements of everyday life. A highly significant correlation found between parental education and levels of life-skills of adolescents, further fortify the notion that education plays a crucial role in making parents aware of the needs of their children

The review related literature shows gap in the area of facilitating and enhancing cognitive (decision making) life skills education programme. There are not many studies conducted only on cognitive life skills only. Few studies have been conducted on quantitative and qualitative data analysis. A mixed method approach has been used in the present study. Many studies have been conducted on social and emotional life skills suggested by WHO. But very few research studies has been conducted on only cognitive life skills such as critical thinking, decision making and problem solving. The researcher could not find cognitive life skill education programme to develop these higher order skills. Many studies are done on self-awareness, empathy, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, coping with stress and coping with emotion. Not many studies have been conducted on cognitive life skills. Few researches have been conducted in this area.

4. CONCEPTS OF THE STUDY

4.1. Concept of Life Skills Education (Cognitive Skills)

Life skill education comprises of three broad areas i.e. cognitive, social and affective skills. Life Skill Education is an approach to create rational thinkers, effective decision makers embedded with adequate information, positive attitude, creative skills and values. Life Skill Education enables students to become adaptive and reflective members of the society and help them to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. The marginalized sections are deprived of being productive citizens as they lack skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and decision making. Life skills have been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life".

4.2. Cognitive Life Skills (Decision Making)

The word decision is the ability or tendency to make decisions quickly and making the act or process of forming, causing, doing or coming into being. It is an act of selecting a logical choice from the available options by one's own responsibility. Decision making is the study of identifying and choosing alternatives based on the values and preferences of the decision maker. It is a trial and error process where an individual has to experiment and learn through the pros and cons of a problem by making the decision through reaching the conclusion. Decision making is one of the basic cognitive processes of human behaviours by which a preferred option or a course of actions is chosen from among a set of alternatives based on certain criteria.

4.3. Marginalized Students (Low Socio-Economic Status)

Socio-economic background takes account of social and economic factors including parents' educational qualifications, parents' occupations, household income, and the level of household overcrowding. It is the economic and sociological combined total measure of students' family (parent) family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation. It include a household's lack of financial problems lack of learning resources such as books, supplies and computers and other contributing factors include lack of parental involvement. Studies have also shown that given the right conditions, every student – including those from less fortunate circumstances – have the opportunity to succeed.

5. CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

- 1. Decision making:** It is the ability of a student of selecting the best alternative from a series of actions to achieve a goal as measured by the score obtained by a student on decision – making (Mincemoyer and Perkins, 2001)
- 2. Marginalized students:** refers to those students who are pushed to the margin of the society and are denied the privileges and resources available in the society. In a normal distribution those who get a score of less than -1σ and $M - 1\sigma$ will be termed as marginalized section.
- 3. Life skills Education:** An approach to train and enhance the cognitive skills of students belonging to the marginalized section of the society and prepare them to face the challenges of life.

6. AIM OF THE STUDY

1. To study the effect of Cognitive Life skills education programme on the decision making skill of adolescent marginalized students of eighth standard of SSC board.

7. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

1. To study the effect of Cognitive Life Skills programme on their decision making skill of adolescent marginalized students of eighth standard of SSC board

8. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

1. There is no significant difference in the post-test scores of students on their decision making of control and experimental group after partialling out the effect of pre-test scores.

9. SAMPLING TECHNIQUE OF THE STUDY

The study adopted a two stage sampling technique. At the first stage, purposive sampling technique was used. At this stage, five schools were selected which were known to admit students from low socio-economic status i.e. marginalized section. Students from these five schools were administered SES Inventory to identify the marginalized schools. This was followed by comparing the SES scores of students from these five schools using the technique of ANOVA. Here, the F-ratio was found to be 24.56 ($P < 0.0001$). Hence, the Mean SES of the five schools was found to be significantly different. Now, the school which had the least SES mean scores was selected as the experimental school and the second least mean scores was identified as control group. At the second stage, intact class was selected from these two schools using cluster sampling technique.

10. SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

The total sample for the study was 320 students studying in eighth standard were selected from aided school in Mumbai city. The age range of the sample was 12+. The sample included students from urban area only. The control group consisted of 147 students and experimental group consisted of 173 students.

The sample consisted of two schools from South Mumbai. One was the experimental group and the other was the control group. The schools were of co-educational type and affiliated to S.S.C board. After administering the pre-test in the two schools, the treatment was given in the experimental school, which was followed by the post-test in the two schools. No such treatment was given in the control group. In the present study, the population comprised of secondary school students of eighth standard from South Mumbai.

11. TOOLS USED FOR THE STUDY

The following tools were used for collecting data:

1. Decision making - Mincemoyer, C. C., & Perkins, D. F. (2001)
2. Socio- economic status Inventory - Patel (2015).

12. INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

The Intervention programme (treatment) included seven lessons on decision making skills. The duration for each lesson was of an hour. A constructivist approach was used. The programme focused on the ability to make and take decisions. Skills that are needed to engage in sound decision-making. The programme focused on defining the problem, identify the alternatives, identify the risk and consequences, select an alternative and evaluate the decision making skills of the marginalized students. The activities included Five Step Decision Making, PWT Decision Making, Decision Making Wheel and problematic situations were given. The activities enabled the students to understand, analyse and take decisions on daily life problems. The intervention programme consisted of 30 hours. 7 to 8 hours were given to enhance the decision making skill.

13. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The methodology of the present study was of an experiment type. The present study adopted a quasi-experimental design of the pre-test- post-test, non-equivalent groups. It is described as follows:

$O_1 \times O_2 \quad O_3 \times O_4$

O_1 and O_3 : Pre-tests (Treatment was given)

O₂ and O₄ : Post-tests (No treatment was given)

X: Experimental group C: Control group

The study also included the qualitative data analysis. Focused group interviews were taken to know the views and opinion of the students.

14. STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE USED FOR THE STUDY

The statistical technique used for the data analysis was ANCOVA.

15. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

Ho₁ : There is no significant difference in the post-test scores of students on their decision making of control and experimental group after partialling out the effect of pre-test scores.

This null hypothesis was tested using the technique of ANCOVA in which the pre-test scores of students on decision making were used as a co-variate. The F-ratio was found to be 15.00 (P = 0.000131) which is statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence there is a significant difference was found in the decision making skills of students from the experimental and control groups on the post-test after adjusting for the pre-test scores.

Conclusion

There is a significant difference in the post – test scores of students on their decision making of control and experimental group after partialling out the effect of pre-test scores.

The mean scores of EG are significantly higher than the mean scores of CG. The mean scores of EG was 69.5362 and the mean score of CG was 64.7839. In other words, the Life Skills Education programme was effective in enhancing decision making of marginalized students of Eighth standard. The effect size of the intervention programme on decision making skill was 0.44. It shows that it had a small effect of the programme.

Discussion

It has been observed that there is a significant difference between the post-test mean scores of EG and CG. The EG had been taught the topics in decision making using constructivists approach whereas no treatment was given in the control group. This implies that the Intervention programme (treatment) had an effect on the decision making of marginalized students of Eighth standard. Therefore, their ability to identify the alternatives, select the proper alternatives and evaluation of these alternatives have been served. The reasons could be that the activities and worksheets helped them to enhance their decision making skills. Strategies such as identify the alternatives, identify the risk and consequences, select an alternative was used which helped the students to look at problematic situations with a systematic approach. It helped students to keep in mind the steps to take decision to a problem. It enabled them to search for alternatives with the help of decision making wheel. PWTD was used which helped them to think critically identify the alternatives and select a decision to arrive at conclusions with explanation and reason. It enhanced their ability to make and take decisions.

The present study is corroborated by the findings of Yadav & Iqbal (2009) which showed positive results of imparting life skills education to students and bringing the change in adolescent's attitude, thought and behaviour by providing supportive environment to them. It is further supported by Mann, Harmoni & Power, 1989; Strauss & Clark, 1992; Fuligni & Eccles, 1993; Schvaneveldt & Adams, 1983'. Not all adolescents are equipped with the necessary pre-requisite skills for effective decision making. These skills are dependent on such factors as age, gender, intelligence, social class, race/ethnicity, family structure and dynamics, religiosity, temperament, and social/culture environment. The study is corroborated by the findings of Dhingra and Chauhan (2017) who reported that Life-skills of adolescents are affected by various factors, socio economic status and education of parents being some of them. Life skills area is not only linked to the pedagogy of active learning (Leena et al. 2003) but also concerned with addressing the balance between knowledge, attitude and skills (CBSE, 2013). Rabiya Saboowala (2018) conducted a similar study on life skills education program and hemisphericity of students on their Cognitive Outcomes. The findings of the study show that the decision making of students from experimental group was significantly affected by the life skills education program as far as gender and psychological well-being are concerned. The decision making skill will help the marginalized students to become independent and responsible decision makers. It will make them realize that it is essential to take views of others while making decisions. Hence other people play a vital role in our life.

16. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The researcher included the qualitative aspect to the study. Focused group interview questions were prepared and conducted to get the views and opinion of the students on the programme. Questions like- What do you like the most about this programme? What is your opinion about the life skills programme?. These type of questions were included in the interview schedule. The students enjoyed and liked the programme. The programme helped them improve in their day to day life. They shared their views about the programme that the programme helped them develop decision making skill correctly. Some time we take decision very quickly and they are sometime not perfect. So to have patience and how to solve problem patiently in every difficult situation was mentioned by few students. It teaches us the steps to take when solving a problem. They appreciated the worksheets given to them for practice and apply what they have learnt. Students shared that the activities made them think and then take decisions in any situation. They were thrilled when they were asked to take the decisions on their own on problematic situation created in the activities. They understood that it is important to think of possible options before taking final decisions. They were not aware of the steps to take decisions and how thinking correctly and systematically can help take correct decision. These skills can bring about a change in their life.

Reactions of Students

Students showed interest in learning about decision making as one of the cognitive skills. Most of the students were eager to know and learn about decision making wheel. Few students were able to express their feelings freely in the class initially. Students came forward and discussed the problem given to them and were able to identify solutions with the help of decision making wheel. The students thought of various alternatives to solve a problem and reach a decision. They kept in mind the advantages and disadvantages of the situation. All the other interesting activities related to decision making glued the attention of the students and hence proved to be one of the successful tools that they can use it in their life.

Students were asked to imagine themselves in the situation where they are in a big trouble by using two steps decision making process. For e.g. when they lose their wallet and ticket checker comes to check in the tickets, what decision will they take to solve this problem? Nearly half of the class raised their eye brows and then started talking with each other. When the teacher inquired about their reactions one of them said "*she would say the truth. It is better to tell the truth and face the consequence. It was due to her carelessness that she lost her wallet*". This activity proved that such situations make them responsible for their own actions and it is important to be cautious. They learnt that it is better to confess. This will help them to be good decision makers.

Students were made aware of the five steps technique to make effective decisions. A problematic situation was given and the students were asked to apply the technique in this situation. The responses given by the students were out of the box. Few of them connected it with their life and searched for a solution. Decision-making process helped them to make more careful and thoughtful decisions. They understood that it is important to be organized and decisions can be made if taken in a systematic manner.

Stories on values were narrated along with thought provoking questions. The stories were an eye opener for them. They learnt to analyze a situation by observing the behaviour of people. It helped them look at situations in a positive manner. They appreciated the lessons and shared their views by stating that wise decisions can be made if information is gathered properly by weighing different options for the problem. Keeping in mind the consequences that may occur. Making decisions and evaluating them after applying it to the situations. Activities conducted during the lessons were unique to them as they were involved and engaged in the learning process.

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