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## LIFE SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was an attempt to find out the existing level of life skills among students with hearing impairment studying higher and technical education. 30 respondents were chosen through purposive sampling procedure. The sample was selected from various schools and colleges. The study was a survey method under descriptive study. Life skills among students with hearing impairment were assessed by Life Skills Self Assessment Scale for Students with Hearing Impairment - (LSSAS-SWHI) which was developed by the researcher. Percentage analysis was applied for analyzing the data. The average of percentage analysis revealed that the level of life skills are very low and low. So, based on the LSSAS-SWHI results and opinion of the parents and teachers it is concluded that the existing level of the life skills are very low and low. The results were also supported by the opinions of the parents and teachers of students with hearing impairment. So, based on the LSSAS-SWHI results and opinion of the parents and teachers it is concluded that the existing level of the life skills are very low. Based on the findings of the study it is suggested to school authorities to have mental health programmes should be organized. Life skills education should be organized to enhance the coping mechanism of the students with hearing impairment.

**KEY WORDS:** Life skills, Students with Hearing Impairment, Parents, Teachers, Mental health.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the highly competitive and busy world of today, it is most essential for every human being irrespective of gender, age and disability are being faced the life's challenges and problems, and their inability in confronting daily problems has made them defenseless. The ever-increasing social changes and the expansion of social relations makes it necessary to prepare people to face difficult situations. To prevent psychological problems and social dysfunctions, psychologists have engaged in life skills training throughout the world in various important situations and places including schools by the recommendation of WHO (1993). Life skills are the capabilities that pave the way for positive and useful behaviour, and these capabilities enable the person to assume his/her

social responsibilities, and cope with daily problems and interpersonal relations without hurting himself/herself and the others. Typically developed children are finding difficult to cope up with the problematic situations, decision making in the day to day life, being hearing impaired the students encounter with different problems in the classroom, school and in the society. They required some sort of training such as social skills, life skills to adjust with the environment and lead a successful life in the society.

Life skills have been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 1993) as "abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life".

Life skills are a large group of psycho-social and interpersonal skills, which can help people, to make informed decisions, communicate effectively and develop coping and self management skills that may help an individual to lead a healthy and productive life. Life Skills are not something new; they are a set of basic skills that enable us to effectively manage the challenges and questions we face in our daily lives. They include confidence, assertiveness, decision-making, and the ability to stay safe and healthy. Schools are uniquely placed to play a key role in promoting and sustaining young people's emotional and social health, as part of their role in providing a rounded quality education which helps pupils to gain the confidence they need to develop into successful adults.

Life skills are something of a buzz word not only in education; it is also the focus of discussion across a range of industries around the world. A definitive list is something educators, governments and employers continue to discuss. But no matter if you call them life skills, 21st century skills or soft skills, students who are able to understand and use these skills, along with their educational qualifications, will be better placed to take advantage of educational and employment opportunities. Life skill education is applicable for all ages of children and adolescents in school. However, the age group targeted is mainly 10 to 18, adolescent years, since young people of this age group seem to be most vulnerable to behaviour related health problems. The programme is for the promotion of health and wellbeing and targeted group is all children.

Initiatives to develop and implement life skills education in schools have been undertaken in many countries around the world. The need for life skills education is highlighted, directly and indirectly in the convention of the rights of the child and a number of international recommendations. Life skills education is aimed at facilitating the development of psychosocial skills that are required to deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life. It includes the application of life skills in the context of specific risk situations and in situations where children and adolescents need to be empowered to promote and protect their rights. Many countries are now considering the development of life skills education in response to the need to reform traditional education systems, which appear to be out of step with the realities of modern social and economic life. Problems such as violence in schools and student drop-out are crippling the ability of school systems to achieve their academic goals. Furthermore, in addition to its wide-ranging applications in primary prevention and the advantages that it can bring for education systems,

life skills education lays the foundation for learning skills that are in great demand in today's job markets.

### **Importance of life skills training on typically children, adolescents:-**

However, in the recent years, big changes have taken place in our traditional society owing to industrialization and globalization. The impact is evident in the entire society, with no exception to adolescents. The family ties have weakened; moral, social, religious and cultural controls rarely exist and a new life style emerged among the adolescents. Adolescence is the most critical phase of an individual. It denotes the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood marked by conspicuous physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes. The inbuilt buffers existing in the society in the form of control and support from the near and dear ones guide the adolescents to grow into a mature adult.

The importance of life skills training becomes clear when we know that life skills training improve psychological and social capabilities. These capabilities help a person to cope effectively with conflicts and life situations and help him/her to act positively and in agreement with other people in the society, the social culture and the environment and promote mental health. As such, practicing life skills leads to reinforcement and change of attitudes, values and behaviours (Naseri, 2002). Therefore, helping children in developing and expanding necessary life skills seems necessary (Shoarinejad, 1992).

Maryam et al. (2011) in their investigation to found the effectiveness of training life skills on adolescent students they found that life skills training lead to significant increase of self-esteem in the study. They also concluded that mental health programs such as life skills training can reduce school and educational problems.

Ramesht and Farshad (2009) have revealed in their study that life skills training was proved to be effective in increasing mental and physical health and also in decreasing the behavioural and social problems. A research also showed that life skills training significantly reduced the alcohol and drug use among the studied adolescents Smith (2004). Life skills training can promote social adjustment Rahmati et al. (2010) Anger control; enhanced self-esteem Young et al. (1997) and improvement in academic performance Elias et al. (1991) were reported in various researches that evaluated the effectiveness of life skills training.

Adibsereshki et al. (2015) have studied the Effectiveness of Life Skills Training on Enhancing the Social Skills of 12-16 years male Children with Hearing Impairment in Inclusive Schools. The Results revealed that life skills' training was

effective for enhancing the social skills of students with hearing impairment. Vernosfaderani (2013) investigated the effectiveness of life skills training on enhancing the self-esteem of 8-16 year old students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools. The results indicated that training life skills to students with hearing impairment promote their self-esteem.

### **Rationale for the study:-**

Adolescence is a challenging transitional period for many young people including persons with disabilities. They go through many changes in physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of their life. These situations lead to unnecessary stress, anger issues and low self esteem resulting in, low academic performances and disruptive behaviour in school and at home. Beneath frequent violent outbursts, sudden mood swings and related interpersonal problems of an adolescent, there may be a person crying out for professional help. All adolescents need support and guidance. When parents find it difficult to handle signs of trouble, professional help should be sought at the earliest. It is a time young people drift away and distance themselves from parents. Spending more time with peers and conforming to the ideas and judgments of their peers are common during this period. This transition is so crucial that adolescents face problems in certain areas of life such as parent child conflicts, risky behaviours and mood changes. If these issues are not resolved the individual suffers role diffusion or negative identity, which results in mismatched abilities and desires, direction lessens and unpreparedness for the psychological challenges of adulthood (Berk, 2007).

Life skills education and/or life skills training is important to help young people cope with challenges that they face in their day-to-day lives. So providing an experience that would strengthen adolescent's coping abilities to counter environmental stress and disadvantages with which they sometimes have to cope with while experiencing is an essential need. One best practice model for contributing to the healthy development of adolescents is a life skills approach. The current researcher has vast experience in the field of special education in dealing with children/students with hearing impairment in both habilitation and rehabilitation for them. From the experience, he has developed a concern to help the students with hearing impairment and deal with their problems. For this reason, investigator is interested to explore how life skills education can mitigate the "storm and stress" experienced by so many adolescents with hearing impairment. Therefore, researcher has attempted to find out the existing level of Life Skills among students with hearing impairment.

## **2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

To understand the existing level of life skills among Students with Hearing Impairment.

### **Research Questions:-**

RQ 1: What is the existing level of life skills among students with hearing impairment?

RQ 2: What is the existing level of life skills among students with hearing impairment with respect to selected demographic variables such as age, locality, type of educational setup, degree of hearing loss, nature of hearing loss, type of hearing loss, type of school, types of family, parental education and parental occupation?

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

The investigator adopted survey method under descriptive research and employed purposive sampling method under non-probability technique to select 30 students with hearing impairment studying technical education like ITI and Polytechnic in Coimbatore as sample for the study. The selected sample was students with hearing impairment with no other associated conditions.

### **Research tool - Life Skills Self Assessment Scale for Students with Hearing Impairment:-**

The research tool employed in the present study was "Life Skills Self Assessment Scale - (LSSAS)" was self prepared by the researcher. To know the existing level of the life skills of SWHI a tool is required to measure the selected (6) dimension of life skills recommended by WHO, namely Self Awareness, Interpersonal Relationship, Effective Communication, Critical Thinking, Decision Making, Problem Solving. A four point rating scale (Always, Often, Rarely and Never) was developed by the researcher to assess the Life skills among the sample, the scoring was 4,3,2 and 1 respectively. The rating scale contained 42 items under 6 dimensions of life skills. In order to validate (both content and face validity) the rating scale, it was distributed among the experts in the field of psychology and special education. Reliability of the scale was found to be 0.90 (reliability coefficient) by using test-retest method.

### **Data collection procedure:-**

The sample for the current study students with hearing impairment studying in various technical schools, centers and colleges like ITI and polytechnics in Coimbatore. The researcher got consent from the selected sample and heads of the institutions to gather relevant data. To clear the doubts to the students with hearing impairment on LSSAS-SWHI with regard to the difficult words/concepts, sign language interpretation service also provided.

## **4. DATA ANALYSIS WITH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**Objective** - To understand the existing level of life skills among Students with Hearing Impairment.

The researcher approached Experts in the field of special education-Hearing Impairment and parents of SWHI to understand the existing level of life skills of SWHI. Personal Interview with open ended questions and focused group discussion

conducted with parents by the researcher to understand the existing level of life skills of SWHI. Based on the observation, interaction and experience with children and students with hearing impairment the experts have reported as

**Table 1 Consolidate Opinion, Suggestions and Recommendations of the Experts and Parents**

S.No	Experts	Total	Low	Very Low	Very Very Low
1	Teacher Educators	10	70% (7)	30% (3)	-
2	Special Educators	10	20% (2)	50% (5)	30% (3)
3	Psychologists	5	-	60% (3)	40% (2)
4	Hearing Impaired Teachers	5	-	60% (3)	40% (2)
5	Integrated school teachers	5	-	60% (3)	40% (2)
6	Parents	20	10%	70%	20%
		Average Percentage	17%	55%	28%

Based on the Opinion, Suggestions and Recommendations of the Experts (Teacher Educators, Special Educators, Psychologists, Hearing Impaired Teachers, Integrated school teachers and parents of SWHI) the researcher concluded that the existing level of the life skills of SWHI is **very low**.

Based on the Scores (average score 63.27) obtained by administering LSSAS-SWHI to students with hearing impairment, the results revealed that the existing level of life skills of SWHI were low as per the scale of LSSAS-SWHI. So LSSAS-SWHI scores were supported by the Experts in the field of special education-Hearing Impairment such as Teacher Educators, Special Educators, Psychologists, Hearing Impaired Teachers, Integrated school teachers and parents of SWHI opinion i.e. the existing level of life skills of SWHI are low. The results are also supported by the studies Vernosfaderani (2013) & Adibsereshki et al. (2015).

Based on scores obtained by administering LSSAS-SWHI to students with hearing impairment the existing level of life kills are differ with respect to selected variables such as age wise 18 & 19 years old students existing level is better than 16 & 17 years old students (16 years-59.27, 17 years-60.12, 18 years-62.37 & 19 years-62.55), locality wise rural students existing level is better than urban (Rural-63.33 & Urban-60.15), type of educational setup wise Integrated school students existing level is better than Special school students (Integrated Students-61.13 & Special school

students-54.15), degree of hearing loss wise mild & moderate students existing level is better than severe & profound (Average score of Mild & Moderate 63.16 & Severe & Profound-55.34), nature of hearing loss wise hard of hearing students existing level is better than deaf students (Hard of hearing-65.81 & Deaf-52.13), types of hearing loss wise conductive hearing loss students existing level is better than Sensory neural and mixed hearing loss students (Conductive-61.15, Sensory Neural-59.21 & Mixed-57.13), type of school wise day scholar students existing level is better than residential school students (Day scholar-66.23 & Residential-58.15), type of family wise students from joint family existing level is better than students with nuclear family (joint family-68.12 & nuclear family -60.10), parental education level wise students with illiterate parents existing level is better than literate parents (illiterate parents-65.09 & lliterate-62.11), parental occupation wise students from agriculture and job families existing level is better than students labour & business families with nuclear family (job-67.21, agriculture-66.48, labour-52.21 and business-57.10).

**5. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

- Rural area students with hearing impairment have better life skills.
- Integrated school students with hearing impairment have better life skills.

- Mild & moderate degree of hearing loss students with hearing impairment have better life skills.
- Day-scholar students with hearing impairment have better life skills.
- Joint family students with hearing impairment have better life skills.
- Illiterate parents students with hearing impairment have better life skills.

## 6. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

- ✓ The Life Skills Self Assessment Scale (LSSAS-SWHI) developed by the researcher would provide strong understanding of the existing level of life skills of students with hearing impairment. And Teachers will get an idea about the existing level of life skills of students with hearing impairment.
- ✓ The study will help the teachers to employ mental health programmes including life skill training on regular basis to improve life skills among the students with hearing impairment. Life skills subject should be incorporated as an integral part of the schools and colleges of hearing impaired
- ✓ The administrators of schools and colleges may plan for the introduction of life skills training program to improve the level of life skills, mental health and quality of life of students with hearing impairment.
- ✓ Though addressing unique educational needs of students with hearing impairment is a great challenge to special and general educators, life skills training should be offered to them with various mode of instructions to lead and better and good quality of life of students with hearing impairment.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Life skills are abilities; individuals can learn that will help them to live a fruitful life. Life skills are defined as non-academic abilities, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that must be learned for success in society Junge (2003). Research in general has indicated the importance of life skills for better performance in the school level activities and academic achievement of high school and higher secondary school students. Life skills are the key factors in personal, psychological, social, academic, and career excellence. The roles and responsibilities of educators are imperative and they should practice life skills for the students along with subject teaching at primary school, high school and higher education level. The current study revealed the existing level of life skills among students with hearing impairment studying

technical education. Life skills fulfill an important role in developing communication skills, interpersonal skills and problem solving skills as these are shaping an individual's personality. Hence, life skills training is very much effective to eliminate barriers, create positive attitude, self-awareness, interpersonal skills, communication skills and problem solving skills and to promote inclusion of persons with hearing impairment to mould them into empowered personality through the right choice of career. The current study suggests to have life skills training programme for the betterment and psycho-social development among students with hearing impairment. The researcher contribution in this study helps to parents and teachers of hearing impaired for the betterment of the life of Children and Students with Hearing Impairment.

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