

STATUS OF LIFE SKILLS OF STUDENTS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT

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Abstract - The purpose of this study was to understand the existing status of life skills of students with hearing impairment. The sample included 150 students with hearing impairment studying from X standard to +2 level in various institutions. The study followed survey method and the sample were selected purposively. The participants were assessed by Life Skills Self Assessment Scale for Students with Hearing Impairment - (LSSAS-SWHI) 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. It was 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 is very low.

Key words : Life skills, Students with Hearing Impairment, Parents, Teachers.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the face of the deep cultural changes and the differences in way of living, today it is essential for every human being irrespective of gender, age, disability to be prepared to face life's challenges and problems. And their inability in confronting daily problems has made them vulnerable. The ever-increasing social changes and complexities 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 and in school with the recommendation of WHO & UNICEF^[10]. 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^[8]. Even typically developing children are finding it difficult to cope up with the problematic situations, decision making in the day to day life, being hearing impaired the students encounter more number of different problems in the classroom, school and in the society. They need 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 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. Life skills represent the psycho-social skills that determine valued behaviour and include reflective skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking, to personal skills such as self-awareness, and to interpersonal skills. Life skills are the skills we need to deal effectively with the challenges in everyday life, whether at school, at work or in our personal lives. 'Life Skills' is a term used to describe a set of skills acquired through learning and/or direct life experience that are used to help individuals and groups effectively handle problems and questions commonly encountered in their daily life. In practice, many skills are used simultaneously.

Facilitating the learning of life skills is to promote healthy behaviour and mental well-being. To be effective, the teaching of life skills should lead to the promotion of positive attitudes and values. The development of life skills requires modeling of life skills by school staff and a "safe", supportive classroom environment that is conducive to the practice and reinforcement of skills. Furthermore, life skills education needs to be developed as part of a whole school initiative designed to support the healthy psychosocial development of children, students and adolescents with and without hearing impairment.

Life skills help children through the turbulence of adolescence and help them guide clear of irresponsible decisions throughout his life. Good life skills enable children to manage money responsibly, make healthy food choices, stand up to unhealthy peer pressure. Parents can Help children learn life skills by practicing the basics at home. Children as young as 3 years can be offered simple either/or choices to practice their decision-making skills. Younger children are guided very directly by their parents. However, as children get older, they become more independent and life skills become more critical. By working with children in their younger years, both parents and teacher have more opportunity to practice the skills that will help them as they get older and face more difficult choices.

Rationale and Need for the study

Life skills and independent living as they relate to Deaf adults is an under-researched area. Literature from deaf education research tends to focus on transitions to adulthood, concentrating on young Deaf people who are still in school^[2]. This is likely due to the fact that independent living skills should be addressed during secondary education^[2]. 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. Adolescence is a period of experimenting, experiencing and expanding. Adolescents need help and guidance indecision-making, problem solving, critical thinking, developing interpersonal skills, self-awareness, empathy, coping with stress and managing emotions. The rebelliousness and dislike for parental intrusion usually keeps parents at bay because teenagers do not relish the idea of help and guidance from parents. However, this may not always be so. 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.

For these reasons, 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 had fifteen years experience as a Special educator/teacher, Resource Teacher (CSS-IEDC), Inclusive Education Resource Teacher (IERT) and Assistant Professor in Special Education (HI). 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, the researcher has attempted to find out the existing status of Life Skills.

Generally life skills training focus on students to acquire capability to live effectively in society and as a definition "at the heart of life skills education is the learning of life skills" [4]. Several researches have been done on assessment of life skills in India and worldwide among typically developed children. Many studies have been conducted about academic achievement, speech and language development, sign language, adaptation and progress in school, only few studies focused on psychosocial aspects such as the quality of life, social and educational adjustment of hearing impaired children. However, limited studies in abroad [9] & [11] have examined the status and impact of life skills training program on all aspects of life skills in a study among children with hearing impairment. So, the researcher tried to find out the existing status of life skills among children/students with hearing impairment in Indian context.

Objectives of the study

- To understand the current level of life skills among C/SWHI.

Research Questions

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

RQ 2: What is the existing level of life skills of students with hearing impairment with respect to gender, locality, type of educational setup, degree of hearing loss, nature of hearing loss, type of hearing loss and type of school?

II. METHOD

The investigator adopted survey method and employed purposive sampling method under non-probability technique in this current study to select the sample of 150 students with hearing impairment high schools, higher secondary schools, ITIs and Polytechnic colleges in Tamil Nadu.

Research tool - Development of Life Skills Self Assessment Scale for Students with Hearing Impairment - (LSSAS-SWHI)

The research tool employed in the present study was "Life Skills Self Assessment Scale - (LSSAS)" was developed by the researcher. To know the current status, awareness and level of the life skills of SWHI a tool is required to measure the life skills. To construct the appropriate tool for the assessment of the SWHI to know the current level/status the researcher had done need analysis with 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. Personal Interview was conducted with Experts (Teacher Educators, Special Educators, Psychologists, Hearing Impaired Teachers, Integrated school teachers) by using open ended questions about the awareness, status and level of life skills of SWHI. Based on the suggestions and recommendation of the experts the researcher had constructed Life skills Self Assessment Scale (LSSAS) to find out the existing level of life skills of students with hearing impairment. 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 70 items under 10 life skills. In order to validate the rating scale, it was distributed among the experts in the field of psychology and special education. The tool was developed in English and further translated into Tamil language for the easy understanding and effective response by the subjects. A general profile called as demographic details was used to obtain the required basic data such as age, gender, Degree of hearing loss, Nature of hearing impairment, onset of Hearing impairment, type of school studied/studying, type of educational set-up and locality from the selected sample.

Reliability of LSSAS-SWHI

To establish the reliability of the tool (LSSAS-SWHI) for the students with hearing impairment population by using test-retest method. The collected data were then tested for the reliability coefficient (0.90) to find out the reliability of the tool. After finding out the reliability coefficient, the tool was used to assess the level of life skills of the selected sample.

Data collection procedure

The sample for the current study students with hearing impairment were studying in different schools and colleges in Tamilnadu. The researcher met Heads of the Institutions of the respective schools and colleges to get the consent to collect the data from the students with hearing impairment at their institutions. The researcher also got consent from the selected sample to gather relevant data.

The selected students with hearing impaired were oriented about the need and importance of the present study. Then they were made to sit comfortably in a place with minimal visual distractions and LSSAS-SWHI was provided to the students with hearing impairment. To clear the doubts to the students with hearing impairment with regard to the difficult words/concepts, sign language interpretation service also provided. The sample was asked to read all items in LSSAS-SWHI carefully. Instructions were given to answer all items and not to leave any of the item.

III. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Objective - To understand the current level of life skills among SWHI.

Qualitative Analysis

The researcher approached 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 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 current level of life skills of SWHI.

- ✓ 70% of The Teacher Educators have reported that the level of life skills is low. 30% of them have informed that the level of life skills is very low, as per their observation, interaction and experience with SWHI.
- ✓ 50% of Special Educators reported that the level of life skills are is low, 30% of them have informed that the level of life skills is very very low and 20% of them have informed that the level of life skills is very low, as per their observation, interaction and experience with SWHI.
- ✓ 60% of Psychologists have reported that the level of life skills is very low, 40% of them have informed that the level of life skills is very low, as per their observation, interaction and experience with SWHI.
- ✓ 60% of Hearing Impaired Teachers have reported that the level of life skills is very low, 40% of them have informed that the level of life skills is very low, as per their observation, interaction and experience with SWHI.
- ✓ 60% of Integrated School Teachers them have reported that the level of life skills is very low, 40% of them have informed that the level of life skills is very low, as per their observation, interaction and experience with SWHI.
- ✓ Many of the Parents (70%) have reported that the level of life skills is very low, few (20%) of them have informed that the level of life skills is very low. Very few (10%) of them have informed that they have not observed any life skills in their children.

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%	30%	-
2	Special Educators	10	20%	50%	30%
3	Psychologists	5	-	60%	40%
4	Hearing Impaired Teachers	5	-	60%	40%
5	Integrated school teachers	5	-	60%	40%
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**.

Quantitative Analysis

Based on the Scores (average score 58.46) obtained by administering LSSAS-SWHI to students with hearing impairment, it was 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 conducted by Vernosfaderani^[9] & Adibsereshki^[1].

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 variable, gender wise male students existing level is better than female students (Male-56.47 & Female-55.12), locality wise rural students existing level is better than urban (Rural-58.71 & Urban-54.26), type of educational setup wise Integrated school students existing level is better than Special school students (Integrated Students-58.24 & Special school students-56.22), degree of hearing loss wise mild & moderate students existing level is better than severe & profound (Average score of Mild & Moderate -62.15 & Severe & Profound-57.23), nature of hearing loss wise hard of hearing students existing level is better than deaf students (Hard of hearing-56.08 & Deaf-53.19), types of hearing loss wise conductive hearing loss students existing level is better than Sensory neural and mixed hearing loss students (Conductive-56.11, Sensory Neural-55.11 & Mixed-54.18), type of school wise day scholar students existing level is better than residential school students (Day schloar-60.31 & Residential-53.05).

IV. Educational Implications of the study

The scope and educational implications of the current study are wider and presented as follows:

- ✓ The Life Skills Self Assessment Scale (LSSAS-SWHI) developed by the researcher would provide strong base to find out the existing level of life skills.
- ✓ Teacher will get insight about the current level of life skills of students with hearing impairment.
- ✓ This study will help the high schools, higher secondary schools, higher educational institutions/organizations to understand the need to promote life skills among the students with hearing impairment.
- ✓ The study will help the teachers to employ 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 school curriculum. On high school and higher secondary levels, a course that requires hearing impaired students to know especially about their communication, inter relationship skills, conflict management and problem solving would prove to be most effective.
- ✓ The administrators of schools and colleges may plan for the introduction of life skills training program to improve the 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.

V. Limitations of the Study

Keeping time and resource constraints in view, the study was limited to the following:

- ✓ The present study is restricted to students with hearing impairment pursuing high school/higher secondary schools/higher education.
- ✓ The present study is conducted only in Tamilnadu state.
- ✓ The sample size is limited to only 150 students with hearing impairment.

VI. CONCLUSION

Life skills are considered as an effective tool to promote pro-social behaviour and correcting behavioural disorders. It is a set of psycho-social skills which are seen as socially acceptable learned behaviour that enable individuals to interact in ways that elicit positive responses and assist in avoiding negative responses from them. 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^[7]. According to Hendricks^[7] Life skills are subset of social skills and include interpersonal performance which consists of two parts. Problem solving skills and having the courage are of these skills^[3]. 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 of students with hearing impairment. 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 of students with hearing impairment. The present study would pave way for the betterment of the life of Children and Students with Hearing Impairment.

VII. REFERENCES

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