Life Skills among Adults through Literacy Intervention in Ajmer District of Rajasthan

Dr. Meenu Sharma  
Assistant Professor Psychology  
School of Humanities  
Lovely Professional University.

Abstract

This study made an attempt to understand how literacy interventions do help for adults in developing life skills. Literacy, undoubtedly, helps individuals to bring changes at their personal & social levels. Those who are literate and further become educated significantly get better life skills to deal with day-to-day challenges. Their psycho-social abilities which are considered as life skills such as social interaction, social intelligence, emotional maturity and other psychological aspects have improved due to literacy intervention among adults in Ajmer district. This study also analyzed the context as life skills vary from individual to individual, for adults, it has been analyzed with respect to their age, gender, and work type and so on. Finding of this study are discussed in context of improved life in villages of Ajmer district.

Key words: Quality of Life, Life Skills, Literacy Intervention, Adults

Introduction

There have been arguments over the years in several forums that literacy is most appropriate if it is useful for daily life functioning. There is no use of literacy and education, if a person is not able to cope with the challenges of daily life and adapt as per the demand & situation. Today, all over the world, we all are facing big challenges of increasing health issues, economic crisis resulted in threat to society. To deal with these threatening issues & problems, it’s an individual ability which helps them to cope with such issues, which are getting prevalent all over the globe. Hence, life skills are required to handle problems in more effective manners. Linkage of literacy with life skills and livelihood has been discussed in Asian countries but its components are not covered by formal system in most of the countries. It is becoming clearer that adult education system has to effectively supplement formal education to achieve the goals articulated in EFA. The Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) of India, the Income Generating Programmes (IGP) and vocational skills courses in Indonesia, Thailand, Korea, Malaysia and Uzbekistan clearly indicate the perceived linkage between adult learning and socio-economic development of countries. Therefore, in this context of development and quality of life, the phenomenon of Life skills has become significant; yet there have been no major research studies specifically related to this issue of Adult Education and Life skills. For this reason the present study was taken up to understand the role of literacy intervention in contributing towards Life skills of adult literates.

Review of Literature

Existing literature suggests that the concept of life skills in Adult Education has been addressed in many ways.

Aoki, A(2004) in the articles “Supporting Functional Literacy and Skills Development Programs: Different Approaches, Common Goals and Challenges” described how adult and lifelong education aim to tackle poverty by combining literacy education, functional knowledge and livelihood skills training for adults through the Bangladesh Post-literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development Project and Ghana National Functional Literacy Project. These projects provide the
resources and training to adult learner for skill upgradation, particularly in Income Generating Activity Skill development.

Rogers, A (2004) “Adult literacy-Adult Motivation” reveals that an adult learning programme, in order to be effective, must be based on the ‘felt needs’ of the learners. Without literacy there is no development and literacy is the key to health, wealth and happiness. Life-related skills such as income-generating skills or health skills need to be focused on as it is found that all adult literacy learners judge their programme in terms of how far they help to achieve their own aspirations and objectives.

Karim, N.A. (1992) “From basic literacy to adult basic education” describes the concept of ABE which has been evolved to embrace all those academic skills considered necessary for an individual to lead a meaningful life with a sense of self-confidence in his society. The integration of social and life skills with adult education content helps the adult to acquire the knowledge and skills for successful living in a progressive society. In the post-literacy stage greater thrust is to be given to what is generally termed as social and life skills.

Subba Rao, I.V. (2004) “Literacy and Adult Learning in Asia”: This article discusses the linkage of literacy with life skills and livelihood in Asian countries. Life skills for young children include personal and inter personal social skills and for adults include vocational skills.

Grady,O & Atkin C (2006) “Skills for life: Has the need to support social cohesion been displaced by the drive for economic success?” explored the relationship between the skills for life strategy and those participating in skills for life training programmes.

Mridula Seth (2007) in “Stories of building Life Skills of Neo-illiterates” focuses on the need for providing opportunities to neo-literates for experiential learning. This paper emphasizes on building life skills of neo-literates through storytelling as it is an interactive performance art of direct interaction between the teller and the audience. For neo-literates, storytelling motivates the person to read and write, and to improve literacy competencies while enhancing life skills in the process.

Conceptual Meaning of Terms

“abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life” are refers Life Skills (WHO). Basically these are psycho-social skills including the decision-making, critical thinking, reflective thinking, problem-solving, and other cognitive abilities. It also includes the social and emotional skills, such as interpersonal, insight and adaptability.

Research Questions

➢ How does Adult Education benefit individuals and community in building their Life Skills?
➢ How has Adult Education contributed for Life Skill among JSS and CE Groups of literacy programme?

Objectives of the Study

➢ To study the impact of literacy intervention for life skills at individuals and the community level.
➢ To study the role of specific literacy programme on Life skill of Adult literates.

Methodology

Design of the study

On the basis of the nature and objectives of the study both quantitative and qualitative research methodology had been adopted. Survey research method was used to conduct the study on two areas of Ajmer District.
Areas Profile: A Brief Scenario

The data was obtained from the two areas of Ajmer district of Rajasthan. One has a rural setting and the other has an urban setting based on the definition given by Census of India.

Ganj is an urban area located in Ajmer district at a distance of 3 km from Ajmer city at Pushkar road. This area comes under the municipal corporation and has eight wards. The population of Ganj area is 35-40 thousand approximately. There is a higher population of SC and more migrant people are residing in these areas. The Muslim community is more prominent in the Kamalabaudi and Delhi gate areas. Initially 11 programmes were started in these areas by District Literacy Continuing Education Officer; out of which one was Nodule programme and the other 10 were Continuing Education in 2003.

Silora (rural area) is located at Ajmer District in Kishangarh Tehsil (block) at a distance of 40 km from the main city of Ajmer. The population of this block is 334984. This block has 31 Gram panchayats and 163 villages. For this study, one silora panchayat samiti was taken which has five villages, and the population of these villages is 4,692. Literacy, Post-literacy and CE programmes have been started in September 1990, May 1993 and December 1997 respectively. 25 programmes of CE were initiated in these villages as part of Jan Shikshana Santhan (JSS) in 1990. At present, these villages have five CE centre in which six types of vocational courses are running.

Sampling Technique

Area sampling- multistage was used to conduct the study. As its multi-stage, so highest number of literate adults were identified at first stage in Ajmer district from census tracts. Then in the Second stage, from a sampling frame consisting of all blocks, (in Ajmer there are eight blocks); for this study, the researcher has selected only one block: Kishangargh. The third stage consists of sub-areas of urban & villages of rural area contained in the block drawn in the second stage of cluster sample. The fourth stage consists of choosing the adult literates within each household drawn in the third stage from the respective areas.

Sample

Sample comprises all the beneficiaries (1220) of the Continuing Education (CE) programmes which mainly include the adult literates who have completed the phase of the Post-literacy programme and are still part of the continuing education programme in Jan Shikshana Sansthan (JSS). They are mainly categorized as: (i) School dropouts; (ii) Pass-outs of primary schools; (iii) Pass-outs of non-formal education programme; and (iv) all other participating members of the community, including marginalized groups, particularly Schedule Caste /Schedule Tribe and women. The criteria of identifying selected adult- literates depends on many factors such as proximity of the village area from urban area, demographic profile of the village, population size of the village, size of the centre and kind of the learners of JSS. The total sample size is 1220. Total three hundred from CE programme, and four hundred from JSS programme was selected from urban areas. In rural area, two-hundred forty adult literate from CE programme & two hundred eighty from JSS programme was selected.

Tools Used

Quantitative and qualitative tools were applied to gathered data. Tools were constructed by following the standardization procedure and then piloted during the try out phase. Once their reliability and validity calculated and then administered on selected sample from the selected areas of villages.

A questionnaire was used to gather the preliminary information such as age, gender, profession, duration in literacy programme, Continuing education programme or Vocational Programme etc was mentioned in first part of questionnaire. Second part of questionnaire includes the items related to literacy and its contribution for life skills along with empowerment, sustainable livelihood.
Focus group discussions and informal discussions on adult literate were conducted to substantiate in gathering qualitative information.

Case profile on 50 adult literates also documented.

Standardized Five Point Rating scale was also administered on selected sample to study the impact of literacy interventions in building up their life skills.

Results and Implications
Results have been analyzed on the basis of both quantitative and qualitative methods. For quantitative, t- test and correlation statistical techniques have been used and for the qualitative, thematic and narrative analysis have been applied for data analysis.

Quantitative Data Analysis
Initially, graphic representation of all variables such as caste, socio-religious background, occupation, etc and such other parameters which serve both as a basic information as well as some kind of a reference to judge the literacy relevance to their requirements in their improvement of life skills have been described in the analysis of study.

Second, to determine the relationship between Empowerment, Sustainable Livelihood and Life Skills, Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. The correlation among empowerment and sustainable livelihood is .340, which is significant at 0.01 level. Similarly between empowerment and life skills is .555 which is significant at 0.01 level. The correlation between sustainable livelihood and life skill is .177, found significant at 0.01 level. Further, it is also found that there is a significant relationship among empowerment, sustainable livelihood and life skills.

Table 1: Correlation between Empowerment, Sustainable livelihood and Life skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value of correlation coefficient in respect of Quality of life component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Between empowerment and sustainable livelihood</td>
<td>.340**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Between empowerment and life skills</td>
<td>.555**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Between sustainable livelihood and life skills</td>
<td>.177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

It was noticeable in this study that correlation between Empowerment and Life Skills is highest among other description. It shows that adult education has become a powerful tool for Life Skills and empowering the adult literate in the district.

Third, to determine any difference among groups, t- tests have been computed.
Table 2: t-table for role of adult education within group with reference to Empowerment, Sustainable livelihood, Life skills, and Quality of life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>t-value obtained for both groups</th>
<th>t-value obtained for both areas</th>
<th>t-value obtained for groups in rural area</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>30.45</td>
<td>12.15</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>17.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable livelihood</td>
<td>8.40</td>
<td>15.64</td>
<td>9.69</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life skills</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>22.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>46.85</td>
<td>8.37</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>24.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results showed the significant difference between CE programme and vocational programme on all the three components, as the t values obtained 30.4 for empowerment, 8.40 for sustainable livelihood, 47.6 life skills and 46.85 for quality of life.

It also illustrated that there is a significant difference between CE and JSS groups on all components with in urban and rural area; as the t value obtained 29.04 for empowerment, 9.69 for sustainable livelihood, 51.15 life skills and 50.26 for quality of life with in urban area which is significant at 0.01 level. On the other hand, in rural area, t value obtained 17.45 for empowerment, 2.10 for sustainable livelihood, 22.67 life skills and 24.81 for quality of life which is significant at 0.01 level. It is clear that due to Life skills capabilities quality of life has improved among adult literate.

In general, findings of this research study reveal that adult education has contributed to building the life skills of adult literates in Ajmer district as it has brought the awareness about literacy and its benefits. It appears to be functional for their day to day activities. In addition, the concerted focus on health and hygiene has had the most tangible result; adult literates rate their improved health consciousness as one of the major gains of their involvement through quality of life improvement programme of Continuing Education (CE). Women adult literates have improved their socio-economic conditions by vocational skills and technical skills programme run by JSS such as sewing, tailoring, embroidery etc. Such findings are also supported by other researchers. Kwapong (2005) reveals that adult education enhances people’s skills, knowledge, awareness and capabilities. In addition, it is found that adult literates are updating their knowledge with new information running by Government Schemes in their villages such as domestic welfare, agriculture, environment protection etc.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The themes of self-dependence and self-direction – are the major life skills have emerged out from thematic analysis of focused group discussions.
Self-dependence: After literacy intervention, all got benefit; many have become more self-dependent. Moreover, they can handle situation tactfully. “Someone who knows how to read and write does not need help,” narrated by adult literate from CE programme. Shaming to do signature in front of other has gone now for them. A young woman in group said: “I want to know mathematics so as not to be cheated in the market.”

They are now able to fight with poverty and therefore quitting poverty specifically JSS or vocational groups as they initiated their own income based small work in their areas. Hence, they are more self-dependent.

Self-direction: From the discussion, it has been pointed out by the adult literates that their learning is itself directing them for their future. They described literacy interventions as an opportunity which has provided education not only for leading their present life but also for their future benefit. They got direction to lead their life in more fruitful manner. The group of the vocational and occupational training programmes stated that they are learning new skills such computer, internet as they know that it has a demand in upcoming and literacy is the foundation for all further learning They have control over their various decisions to do with educational tasks and activities that they have learnt so far from literacy and training programme.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that literacy leads to education and results in empowerment with the acquisition of knowledge and skills which also builds their Life Skills. Implications of this study confirm that adult education plays an instrumental role in building life skills of adults. It is hoped that the findings of the present study will earn the attention of policy makers, interdisciplinary academicians, researchers to analyses the long term benefits of linkage of literacy and life skills in order to build life skills of adult literates and thus improve their Quality of Life.

Selected References


Reports
34. Working Group Report on Elementary education & literacy for XI five year plan brought out by Department of school education & literacy/o HRD, GOI.

Websites
35. www.nlm.nic.in
37. www.iiz-dvv.de