

ASSESSMENT OF LIFE SKILLS AMONG COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATE-STUDENTS; IMPLICATION FOR ENHANCING STUDENTS ACADEMICS AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The literature indicates that life skills assessment and development is endemic throughout the globe. However, lacking are national studies that have researched life skills assessment at the college level. The present investigation aimed to assess the level of life skills among college undergraduate-students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Besides, the differences based on personal and demographic attributes in respect of life skills were also taken into consideration. A sample of (n=794) 5 % of the total population (15890) was selected and included in the survey. Life Skills Assessment Scale (LSAS) developed by (N.R. Prakash, S. Nirmala Devi, 2014) was used for collecting the required data. The gathered information was processed using (SPSS) version 24. Results of the study indicated that the overall nature of life skills among college students is moderate. The findings of the study indicated that the female-students reported less life skills compared to their counterparts' male undergraduate-students ($p < .05$). However, the analyzed data found no significant difference in their Life skills concerning Locality, and Scheme of studies ($p > .05$). It is hoped that the results of this research will be more helpful for administrators, educators, curriculum designers and other social duties to improve teaching-learning and personality development for learners.

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Introduction

Life skills may be defined as capacities for psychosocial adaptation and positive conduct that helps in enabling individuals to effectively deal with the needs and problems of everyday life. Life skills are classified into three general categories of abilities: cognitive ability to analyze and use information, personal ability to develop and self-manage private agencies, and interpersonal ability to communicate and interact effectively with others. (Heinssen, Liberman, & Kopelowicz, 2000). Life skills are those adaptive psychosocial and positive behavioral capacities that help prepare individual to cope with the day to day demands efficiently and successfully. (Shastri, 2013).

Education in life skills is a structured program of participatory learning based on requirements and outcomes aimed at enhancing beneficial and adaptive behavior by helping people create and exercise psycho-social abilities that minimize risk factors and maximize protective factors (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Life skills training program is theoretical and evidence-based, learner-focused, provided by skilled facilitators, and properly assessed to guarantee continuous improvement of documented outcomes.

A term used to define life skills education addressing particular material or conducted to attain particular objectives, e.g. peace education based on life skills or HIV & AIDS education based on life skills. The phrase makes it clear that an approach to life skills will be used to teach the subject matter, meaning that participatory teaching / learning techniques will be used to assist students not only create understanding, but also the psycho-social life abilities they may need to use information to inform and perform behavior (Heinrichs, 2002).

Developing everyday life skills allows learners to explore new methods of thinking and solving issues. Similarly, these skills help to acknowledge their behavioral effects and educate them not to blame

others but to take responsibility for what they do (Wallace, 2012). Various components of life skills develop the students speaking abilities, work in a collaboration, make efficient decision. Besides, these skills help students to comprehend their choices outside the school setting, develop self-awareness, and appreciation for others (Trilling, B., & Fadel, 2009).

Life skills address the key abilities of communication and self-organization that enable people to consider their further growth. Increased self-confidence contributes to a sense of authority over their own lives—and a capacity to contribute in a multitude of respects to their community's life (Jones & Lavallee, 2009).

Research revealed that those who have satisfactory life skills are better able to deal with growing demands of a constantly evolving environment (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012). The dramatic change in the fields of technology and media have influenced various domains of life, such as education, workplace, and even our home lives. These new challenges and demands need proper and effective means to manage. In this regard, life skills help in enabling the students to make them effectively manage with these modern stress and frustration (Aldwin, 2007).

Based on previous studies, life skills components such as, self-esteem, interpersonal skills, effective communication, setting pre-determined goals, effective decision-making, problem-solving skills are important factors for promoting mental health of the students and also to keep them away from social aberrations or psychological ailments (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2007; Kuiper & Pesut, 2004). However, lack of such abilities would lead learners through ineffective and maladaptive behaviors to get away with stressful disorders (Frey, Hirschstein, & Guzzo, 2000).

Keeping into consideration, the significance of life skills in general and particular in the lives of students, the present study was thus conducted to assess the life skills among colleges students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The researcher is of the opinion that this research is more essential for

college's students to comprehend and develop such fundamental skills for educational, personal and professional results.

Objectives

1. To evaluate the overall status of life skills among colleges students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
2. To determine the significant difference in their life skills based on the personal and demographic attributes of the participants.

Hypotheses

Ha 1 There is significant difference in the overall status of life skills among colleges students.

Ha 2 There is significant difference in their life skills based on the personal and demographic attributes of the participants.

Research Methodology

Participants

All the students of Government Degree Colleges constituted population for this study. However, a sample of (n=794) 5 % of the population (15890) was selected and included in the survey.

Research Design

The cross-sectional research design was conducted in five randomly selected districts of KP, in April, 2019 to collect the required data.

Research Instrument

Life Skills Assessment Scale (LSAS) developed by (N.R. Prakash, S. Nirmala Devi, 2014) was used for collecting the required data.

Analysis of Data

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS, version 24. The present status of various components of life skills of college's students were analyzed with range and percentage. Independent sample t-test was

applied to compare the quantitative variables of the study. $P < 0.05$ were considered as significant in this study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Demographics Profile

The demographic profile of the study participants comprised of gender, locality, and scheme of studies. According to the table 1. (503, 63.35% males; 291, 36.65% females), (467, 58.81% rural; 327, 41.19% urban), and (483, 60.83% arts; 311, 39.17% science) undergraduate-students participated in the study.

Table. 1 Level of Students Life Skills

Demographics Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	503	63.35%
	Female	291	36.65
Locality	Urban	467	58.81
	Rural	327	41.19
Scheme of Studies	Art	483	60.83
	Science	311	39.17
Total		794	100%

The students' levels in respect of various components of life skills were processed through computer and analyzed with range and percentage. The results have been presented in table 1. According to the table, 16.8% students fell in the category of low, 68% reported moderate level, and 14.4% reported high level of life skills.

Table. 2 Level of Students Life Skills

Variable	Level	Range	No	Percentage
Life Skills	Low	49-69	134	16.8%
	Moderate	70-108	546	68%
	High	109-127	114	14.4%

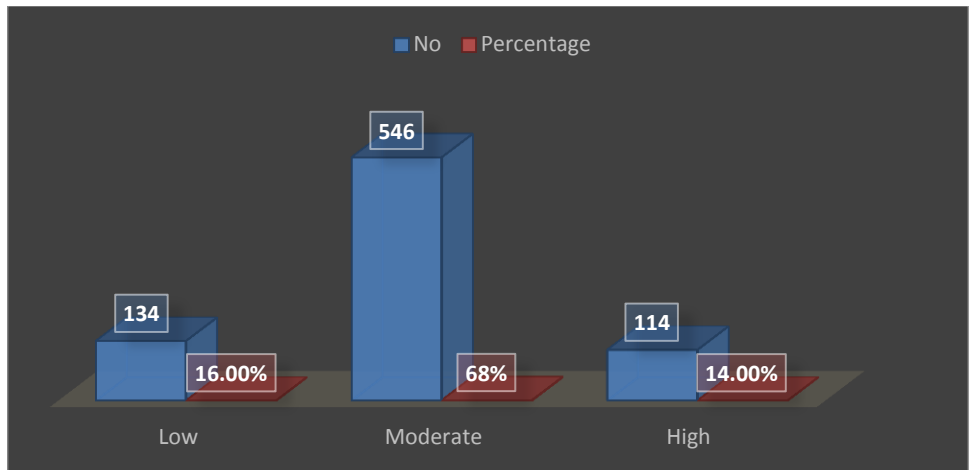


Figure 1 Sowing levels of life skills among participants

Independent sample t-test was used to test the hypothesis formulated by the investigators and the results are presented in table-1. According to the results, p value for different life skills were noted .007, .025, .023, .041, .031, and .017 respectively for decision-making skills, critical g, creative thinking, problem solving, effective communication, and interpersonal relation, which is lower than the significant level of .05. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis formulated by the researchers has been accepted. Hence, it can be interpreted that male and female students indicated significant difference in respect to various components of life skills.

Table. 3 Gender-based differences with respect to various components of Life Skills

Components of Life Skills	Gender n	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	
Decision Making	Males	503	12.62	2.02	2.803	.007
	Females	291	11.98	1.87		
Critical Thinking	Males	503	58.44	8.44	2.208	.025
	Females	291	57.43	8.15		
Creative Thinking	Males	503	9.29	1.73	2.482	.023
	Females	291	7.22	1.37		
Problem Solving	Males	503	13.74	2.85	2.461	.041
	Females	291	11.04	2.12		
Effective Communication	Males	503	24.21	3.82	2.782	.031
	Females	291	22.47	3.22		
Inter-personal Relation	Males	503	24.33	3.43	2.561	.017
	Females	291	23.78	3.45		

significant at .05

To compare the mean score of two groups such as rural and urban in respect of various life skills, the researchers applied independent sample t-test and the results are presented in table.2. Since the p-values of various components of life skills are greater than .05, hence the null hypothesis is accepted at .05 level of significant. Therefore, it can be interpreted that there is no significant difference between rural and urban students in respect to various components of life skills.

Table. 4 Locality-based differences with respect to various components of Life Skills

Components of Life Skills	Locality	n	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Decision Making	Rural	327	22.62	3.733	0.944	.343
	Urban	467	22.93	3.512		
Critical Thinking	Rural	327	23.94	3.488	1.424	.152
	Urban	467	24.39	3.445		
Creative Thinking	Rural	327	22.27	3.386	0.829	.404
	Urban	467	22.51	3.183		
Problem Solving	Rural	327	24.08	3.410	0.655	

	Urban	467	23.89	3.116		.509
Effective	Rural	327	17.46	5.521		
Communication	Urban	467	18.33	4.998	1.859	.065
Inter-personal	Rural	327	7.18	1.535		
Relation	Urban	467	7.33	1.327	1.177	.242

significant at .05

To analyze the statistical differences between Arts and Science students in respect to various components of life skills, a student's t-test was applied, and the results are presented in table 3. It is observed that the p-values of various components of life skills are greater than .05, hence the null hypothesis is accepted at .05 level of significant. Therefore, it can be interpreted that male and female students indicated no significant difference in respect to various components of life skills.

Table. 5 Faculty-wise differences with respect to various components of Life Skills

Components of Life Skills	Gender	n	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Decision Making	Arts	483	17.92	4.64	1.803	.921
	Science	311	17.97	6.32		
Critical Thinking	Arts	483	24.30	2.98	0.364	.713
	Science	311	24.42	3.11		
Creative Thinking	Arts	483	57.91	8.25	0.946	.340
	Science	311	57.14	8.15		
Problem Solving	Arts	483	23.78	3.45	1.561	.117
	Science	311	24.33	3.43		
Effective Communication	Arts	483	22.21	3.36	0.781	.431
	Science	311	22.47	3.22		
Inter-personal Relation	Arts	483	24.12	2.64	0.947	.341
	Science	311	24.41	3.14		

significant at .05

Discussion

This study aimed to assess the level of life skills among college students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. A sample of (n=794) filled in the Life

Skills Assessment Scale. The results of the study that the overall nature of life skills among college students is moderate. The findings of the present study are consistent with the studies conducted by Al-Qassem, Mahasneh, Mahasneh, Al-Zoubi, & Batayeneh (2014) whose findings revealed that the level of life skills among students was below the required level. Likewise, the same findings have been portrayed by Al-Lolo (2005) whose findings revealed that the level of life skills among undergraduate students is moderate. Another study indicated that a large percentage of the sample does not allocate sufficient life skills (Anna-Kavga, 2009).

As for the variables of gender, locality and scheme of studies are concerned, findings of the study indicated no statistically significant differences about various components of life skills among college students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The scientists attributed that because of the distinction in the social form in getting them, life abilities are general abilities. Therefore, learners, both males, and females are exposed to life skills, and during the same study phases, they interacted with life, without any distinction in the learning environment. These findings are compatible with the findings of Al-Sayyed (2007) who found no statistically significant differences in the students' possession degree of various life skills.

The findings of this research should be viewed with caution as each participant in their organization had not learned life skills. The researchers now felt that life skills classes could be included in the instructional curriculum in order to train the learners for their future careers.

Conclusion

In the present study, we found that the level of various life skills among college students is moderate. Furthermore, findings of the present revealed statistically significant difference concerning demographic variable of gender. However, no statistically significant difference was

noted pertaining to locality, and scheme of the studies for various components of life skills among college undergraduate-students. Baes on these findings, we recommended that a unit of life skills might be included in the curriculum of different levels of education. Because implementation of life skills-based curriculum and education may develop students' basic skills. We hope the results of this research will be more helpful for administrators, educators, curriculum designers and other social duties to improve teaching-learning and personality development for learners.

Conflict of Interest

The researchers have declared no conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions

All writers have contributed in equal measure to this project and article. The final manuscript was read and approved by all writers.

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