



THE LIFE-SKILLS OF UNDER GRADUATE STUDENTS: NEED OF THE HOUR FOR THEIR BRIGHT FUTURE

Dr. M. Solomon Raju

Asst. Professor

Department of Education

Andhra University

Visakhapatnam

Andhra Pradesh

In everyday life, the development of life skills helps students to find new ways of thinking and problem solving. Build confidence both in spoken skills and for group collaboration and cooperation. Adolescence is a vital stage of growth and development. It marks the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Adolescence is characterized by rapid physiological changes and psychological maturation. It is also the stage when the young people extend their relationships beyond parents and family and are intensely influenced by their peers and the outside world in general. As adolescents mature cognitively, their mental process becomes more analytical. They are now capable of abstract thinking, better articulation and of developing an independent ideology. These are truly the years of creativity, idealism, buoyancy and a spirit of adventure. Recognize the impact of their actions and teaches them to take responsibility for what they do rather than blame others. This article will help us to understand the present need and help them for their better future.

Key words: Adolescence, life skills, Thinking skills, Social skills, Self-awareness, Coping stress

Education is one of the most powerful instruments of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of national goals. It helps to increase the productivity, achieve national and emotional integration, accelerate the process of modernization and cultivate social, moral and spiritual values among people. It becomes essential for the economic and cultural development of a country and for realizing the ideal of a socialistic pattern of society. To realize this ideal, the educational system of any country must produce young men and women of character and ability who are committed to national service and development. Only then will education be able to play its vital role in promoting national progress and creating a sense of common citizenship.

The successful running of any educational system in general and secondary education in particular depends mainly on factors like the teacher, the pupil, the curriculum, the teaching equipment etc. Of these, the teacher is the pivot on whom the entire educational structure rests. Referring to the importance of a teacher in the educational structure, the Indian Education Commission (1964-66) rightly remarked: "Of all the different

factors which influence the quality of education and its contribution to national development, the quality, competence and character of teachers are undoubtedly the most significant". (Report of the Indian Education Commission, 1966, p.84)

Life Skills:

The term 'Life Skills' refers to the skills usually associated with managing and living a better quality of life, they help us to accomplish our ambitions and live to our full potential. There is no definitive list of life skills, certain skills may be more or less relevant to you depending on your life circumstances, culture, beliefs, age, geographic location etc. Perhaps the most important life skill is the ability to learn. By learning new skills we increase our understanding of the world around us and equip ourselves with the tools we need to live a more productive and fulfilling life. Life skills are not always taught directly but often learned indirectly through experience and practice. Hence life-skills education, like the process of education is a continuous and never ending process. Life skills have been defined as, "The abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" ---- ---World Health Organization. 'Adaptive' means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. 'Positive behavior' implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions. The term 'Livelihood skills' or occupational/vocational skills refer to capabilities, resources and opportunities to pursue individual and household economic goals and relate to income generation. Thus, Life Skills are distinct from livelihood skills. Key Life Skills In General Key Life Skills In General Life skills include Psychological 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. There are two types of skills, They are 1. Thinking skills. 2. Social skills.

THINKING SKILLS:

The skills related to thinking are termed as thinking skills. The thinking skills relate to reflection at a personal level.

Social Skills:

The skills related to dealing with others are termed as 'Social Skills'. Social skills include interpersonal skills and do not necessarily depend on logical thinking. It is the combination of these two types of skills that are needed for achieving assertive behavior and negotiating effectively. 'Emotional' can be perceived, as a skill not only in making rational decisions but also in being able to make others agree to one's terms first with oneself is important.

Thus, self-management is an important skill including managing/coping with feelings, emotions, stress and resisting peer and family pressure. In general, the ten core life skills laid down by World Health Organization are: 1. Self- awareness. 2. Empathy. 3. Critical thinking. 4. Creative thinking. 5. Decision

making. 6. Problem Solving. 7. Effective Communication. 8. Interpersonal relationship. 9. Coping with Stress. 10. Coping with emotions.

1. Self-Awareness: Awareness: Self-awareness is the recognition of 'Self', or character, our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us recognize when we are stressed or feel under pressure. It is often a prerequisite to effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy with others.

2. Empathy: - Empathy: Empathy is to have a successful relationship with our loved ones and society, to understand and care about other people's needs, desires and feelings. Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person. The absence of empathy makes our communication with others as one-way traffic. Empathy enables us to understand ourselves as well as others and allows us to communicate our needs and desires. Empathy can improve social interactions, especially, in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity.

3. Critical thinking: Critical thinking is an ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behavior, such as values, peer pressure and media.

4. Creative thinking: Creative thinking is a novel way of seeing or doing things. It is characteristic of four components. They are, a) Fluency. b) Flexibility. c) Originality and d) Elaboration.

5. Decision Making: Decision making is a life skill that helps us to deal constructively with decisions about life. It teaches how to make decisions actively.

6. Problem Solving: Problem solving helps us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Significantly that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain.

7. Interpersonal relationship: Interpersonal skills help us to relate positively while interacting with others. This skill is necessary to make and keep friendly relationships. These friendly relationships are necessary to maintain mental and social well-being.

8. Effective Communication: Effective communication is the ability to express ourselves both verbally and non-verbally according to the situation.

9. Coping with Stress: To recognize the sources of stress and its effect on our lives and acting in ways that help us control our levels of stress by changing lifestyles and relaxing whenever possible.

10. Coping with Emotions: Coping with emotions is the Coping with Emotions: ability to recognize emotions within, and their influence on the behavior. It also deals with the ability to control the intense emotions like anger or sadness that cause negative effects.

Life Skills- Life Skills-Necessity Necessity

1. Life skills are essentially those abilities that help promote overall wellbeing and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. 2. Life skills are the beginning of wisdom, which focuses on behavioral change or development approach designed to address a balance of three areas- knowledge, attitude and skills.

3. Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitude and values into actual abilities that is what to do and how to do it, given the scope and opportunity to do so. 4. Life skills however are not a panacea of “how to do abilities” as they are not the only factors that affect behaviors. Many factors such as social support, culture and environment affect motivation and ability to behave in positive ways. 5. Effective acquisition and application of life skill can influence the way one feels about others, ourselves and will equally influence the way we perceived by others. It contributes to perception of self-confidence and self- esteem. 6. Life skills for psychosocial competence needs to be distinguished from other important skills that young people will acquire as they grow up such as reading, numbers, technical and livelihood skills.

ADOLESCENCE: Adolescence is a vital stage of growth and development. It marks the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Adolescence is characterized by rapid physiological changes and psychological maturation. It is also the stage when the young people extend their relationships beyond parents and family and are intensely influenced by their peers and the outside world in general. As adolescents mature cognitively, their mental process becomes more analytical. They are now capable of abstract thinking, better articulation and of developing an independent ideology. These are truly the years of creativity, idealism, buoyancy and a spirit of adventure. These are also the years of experimentation and risk-taking, of giving into a negative peer pressure, of taking uninformed decisions on crucial issues, especially relating to their bodies and their sexuality. Adolescence is thus a turning point in one’s life, a period of increased potential, but also one great vulnerability.

TRANSFORMATION FROM ADOLESCENCE TO YOUTH

Growing up is a difficult task for both late adolescents and young adult. At this stage, decisions regarding education, career, finding a partner and whether to build a family are made. This period is considered most stressful, given inherent challenges that may alter their life journey. Hence, it is vital that students are occupied with optimum skills necessary in their adaptation to new life. At this period, young adults start their separation from family, with the view of developing identity. They become more independent by creating their own goals and decisions for life. According to the World Health Organization, individuals with adequate life skills adapt and have positive behaviors in dealing with the challenges and demands of everyday life. Skilled young adults are able to form relationships in their social contexts necessary in widening their social spectrum and intimacy; furthermore, WHO singled out low academic achievement, poor social competence, poverty, truancy and impulsiveness as risk factors for violence among 13 individuals. By developing life skills, social and emotional skills can help young adults manage their life better.

DEVELOPING LIFE SKILLS IN YOUTH

The World Health Organization (1997) defines youth as people between the ages of 15 and 24 years and adolescents as people between the ages of 10 and 19 years. The term “young people” can be used as shorthand for these groups combined (ages 10 to 24). As today’s societies rapidly become ever more diversified both demographically and politically, our youth and adolescents face multifaceted challenges.

Scholars, practitioners, and institutional administrators agree that having life skills help young people navigate these societal challenges, thereby contributing to their healthy, positive, and productive development.

VARIOUS DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF LIFE

According to the World Health Organization (1997), life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. By emphasizing adaptation and a positive orientation, this commonly used definition is consistent with the skills-based, positive approach to youth development (e.g. Beson, 2007).

UNICEF (2002) defines life skills as psycho-social and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop the coping and self-management skills needed for a healthy and productive life. Life skills can be applied to actions directed at either the self, other people, or the local environment; their goal is to promote health and well-being at all these levels

THE CORE DIMENSIONS OF LIFE SKILLS

Young people need a wide range of intra- and interpersonal skills to face the complex challenges of today's world, but it would be of little practical value to produce a long list of all the skills they may need in various contexts and at various times in their lives. A better choice is to consider only the skills that are most helpful to young people in managing situations in an age-appropriate way.

CORE DIMENSIONS AND EXAMPLES OF LIFE SKILLS

SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness has been called "arguably the most fundamental issue in psychology, from both a developmental and an evolutionary perspective". In psychology, the concept of "self-awareness" is used in different ways: As a form of intelligence, self-awareness can be an understanding of one's own knowledge, attitudes, and opinions. The responsible role is when they are dependable and you know they will make good decisions on their own. When they act in a reliable way and do things to make you proud of them. The irresponsible role is the opposite of responsible, when they are not trustworthy, they do everything you tell them not to do and should not be on their own because they may do something to get into trouble.

COPING STRESS

People feel stressed when they feel like the demands or pressures on them are more than what they can cope with. Everyone feels stressed at times. The students may feel under pressure, worried, tense, upset, sad, and angry – or maybe a mixture of uncomfortable feelings. These feelings can be entirely normal, but sometimes stress can get too much and can even trigger a mental illness. Sometimes the adolescent students try to 'block out' stress by using drugs or alcohol. This makes things worse in the end. It is important to get help if stress is getting too much or the students are using drugs or alcohol to try and cope.

Causes of Stress: There are many reasons why the adolescents might feel stressed. For example: Academic work piling up Preparing for exams. Being teased or bullied at school .Arguing with parents, brothers or

sisters, or friends. Stress can be even worse if the family is breaking up, someone close to is ill or dies, or if being physically or sexually abused. Positive events can also be stressful

Effects of stress:

Stress can affect different people in different ways. Stress can affect your body and also one's feelings. Some of the effects of stress are: Effects on body: 1) Feeling tired 2) Having difficulty sleeping 3) Going off your food 4) Stomach aches 5) Headaches 6) Aches and pains in your neck and shoulders.

Effects on feelings:

1. Feeling sad 2. Being irritable, losing temper easily 3. Finding hard, for the student to keep mind on College work.

Coping with stress:

There are several things, which a student can do to cope with stress. 1. Do not suffer in silence! Feeling alone makes stress harder to deal with. 2. Talking to somebody, he or she trusts can really help the student to deal with stress and to work out how to tackle the problems that are causing it. 3. Make a list of all the things in your life that are making you feel stressed— write them down on a piece of paper. Then take each one in turn and list all the things you could do to tackle it. This can help you sort things out in your head. Problems look easier to deal with one at a time than in a big jumble in your head! 4. Take a break - do something that you really enjoy. 5. Do something relaxing, for example take a hot bath or watch a film. 6. Do some exercise. This produces chemicals in your body called 'endorphins' which make you feel good. When a student had to seek help when a student had to seek help Sometimes stress gets on top of the student, especially when the situation causing the stress goes on and on and the problems just seem to keep building up. The student thus feels trapped, as if there is no way out and no solution to his or her problems. If the student feel like this, it is important to seek help.

Signs that stress is getting too much and that the student should get help:

1. The student notices that stress is affecting his or her health. 2. The student feels so desperate that he or she thinks about stopping, running away or harming him or herself. 3. The student feels low, sad, tearful, or that life is not worth living. 4. The students lose their appetite and find it difficult to sleep. 5. The students in stress have worries, feelings and thoughts that are hard to talk about because they feel people will not understand them or will think they are 'weird'. 6. The students hear voices telling them what to do, or making them behave strangely. 7. The students think of using drugs or alcohol to block out stress.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Nature of Educational Research: Nature of Educational Research: Educational research is considered to be a "prominent key" which is essential to the opening up of new doors and vistas in education. Educational research must be aimed at finding solutions to unsolved problems; at devising new media to meet certain

functional needs which have never been met before; at finding better process and contents that there currently are in vogue.

Objectives of the study:

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives.

1. To study the opinion of Under Graduate Students towards Life Skills in Vizianagaram District.
2. To study the significant difference between male and female students in their perceptions towards Life Skills in Vizianagaram District.

Hypotheses of the study: Hypotheses of the study:

1. Investigator wants to know overall Perception.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female students' perceptions with respect to Awareness and Coping Stress, Problem Solving Skills, and Coping with Emotions towards Life Skills of Under Graduate Students in Vizianagaram District.

Design of the Study:

The type of research undertaken by the investigator is exploratory in nature. It is a descriptive survey method of research. The word 'survey' has been derived from the two words 'sure' and 'veer' which means 'over' and 'see' respectively. Descriptive survey tells us 'what is'. This has a very wide scope. It describes and interprets what exists at present. According to John W. Best, descriptive survey research is concerned with condition or relationship that exist; practice that prevail; beliefs points of view, or attitude that are held; process that are going on; effects that are being built; or trends that are developing. The investigator followed the survey method of the descriptive research. It involves a clearly defined imaginative planning, careful analysis and interpretation of data gathered and logical reporting on the investigation. To carry out the research of this type for collection of data, for testing the hypothesis and for arriving at certain conclusions, it is necessary to choose the technique and the proper tools to be employed. Each data gathering device has both merits and limitation. For this investigation the questionnaire had been considered as a suitable tool for the collection of data

Since the present investigation is related to the collection of information from the opinions of the students regarding Life-skills of Under Graduate Students, an 'opinionnaire' was constructed and administered and to find out the opinions of students towards Life-skills.

The final tool for students hence, comprises of an opinionnaire with a provision for gathering personal data and questions relating to the Life-Skills of Under Graduate Students. The Lickert scale technique was used. Each statement is followed by five options i.e., Strongly Agree, Slightly Agree, Not Sure, Slightly Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

The tools were finalized for the collection of data.

S.No	Name of the area	No of items
1	Self-Awareness Coping Stress	20
2	Problem Solving Skills	15
3	Coping with Emotions	15
	Total	50

Population and Sampling:

Data is collected by the census method or by the sample method. In the sample method the information is obtained only from a part of the population and based on this inference is drawn for the entire population. Sampling is thus a study of the part of the urban area of Vizianagaram District. The investigator adopted a simple random sampling technique to identify the Colleges and students for collecting the data. All together 160 students from 5 Colleges in Vizianagaram district were randomly selected for the study.

Statistical Techniques Used:

As the present study is of more of qualitative in nature, collected data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Quantitative data were analyzed with the simple statistical techniques. The investigation has been carried out by the descriptive statistical analysis, such as calculating measures of central tendency like Mean and calculating measures of dispersion like Standard Deviation. For testing the null hypotheses, the 't' - test and Analysis of Variance have been used by the investigator. The 't'-test was used to test the null hypotheses when the data was correlated from matched groups. Analysis of (ANOVA) variance was used to find out the effect, if any, of the variables studied. The data were coded and prepared for analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Statistical Computations

After the quantification of data, various statistical measures such as percentages, Means, St Means, St Means, Standard Deviations 't' -Value and Analysis of and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) have been calculated and presented in this chapter

Table 1: Overall perception of students towards Overall perception of students towards Life – Skills of Under Graduate students in Vizianagaram District.

Area	N	Min. Score	Max. Score	Mean	Mean Percent	Std. Dev
Self - Awareness and Coping Stress	200	20	100	72.02	72.02	8.55
Problem Solving Skills	200	15	75	53.97	71.96	6.67
Coping with Emotions	200	15	75	55.09	73.45	7.18
Overall perceptions	200	50	250	181.08	72.43	17.92

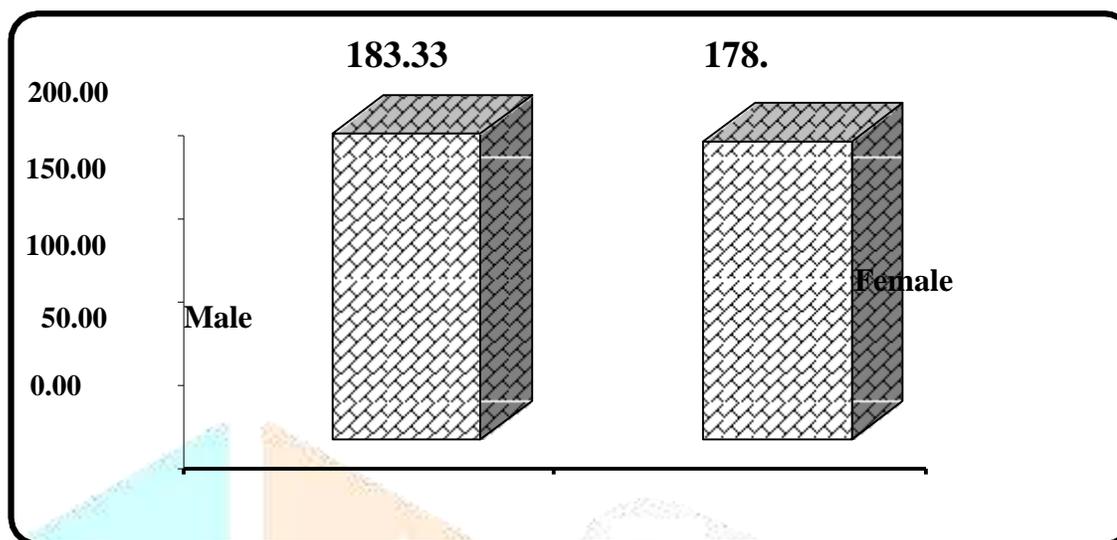
From the above table 1 shows that, Under Graduation Students of Vizianagaram District expressed high perceptions with respect to Self -Awareness and Coping Stress, Problem Solving Skills, Coping with Emotions and overall perceptions towards Life Skills of Under Graduation Students in Vizianagaram District. The mean and mean percentages are 72.02, 53.97, 55.09 and 181.08 which are 72.02%, 71.96%, 73.45%, and 72.43% respectively.

Table 2: Significant difference between male and female students overall opinion towards Life – Skills of Under Graduate Students in Vizianagaram District. District.

Area	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value
Overall Perceptions	Male	100	183.33	13.19	1.62 NS	0.11
	Female	100	178.76	21.57		

Table 2 shows that, the mean overall perceptions of male students towards Life Skills (183.33) is slightly higher than the female students (178.76). The ‘t’ value is found to be 1.62 and the ‘p’ value is 0.11, which is not significant. This shows that there is no significant difference between male and female students overall perceptions towards Life Skills of under Graduation Students in Visakhapatnam District. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted

Graph-1: Mean comparison between male and female students opinion towards Life – Skills



Major Findings:

1. Under Graduation Students of Vizianagaram District expressed high perceptions with respect to Self - Awareness and Coping Stress, Problem Solving Skills, Coping with Emotions and overall 91 perceptions towards Life Skills of under Graduation Students in Vizianagaram District.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female students' perceptions with respect to Self - Awareness and Coping Stress towards Life Skills of under Graduation Students in Vizianagaram District.

Conclusions:

Under Graduation Students of Vizianagaram District expressed high perceptions with respect to Awareness and Coping Stress, Problem Solving Skills, Coping with Emotions and overall perceptions towards Life Skills of under Graduation Students in Vizianagaram District. It shows the importance of Life skills to be implemented in our curriculum from school stage to post graduation level.

Education Implications:

1. Life skills education from the primary level enables students to face the society confidently.
2. Life Skills training along with the regular academic activities improve the quality of the student's life, thereby improving the quality of the society.
3. The life-Skills education at the secondary level enables the adolescent student to cope with the physiological changes and hormonal changes and make them psychologically stable.
4. Life-Skills education at the higher level helps the students to plan their career and reach their goals by overcoming their stress and negative peer pressure.

5. Life-Skills education contributes in developing and assertive personality
6. Life-Skills education helps to build positive attitudes and values, ultimately contributing to overall personality of the student.

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