

NEED FOR STRENGTH BASED INTERVENTIONS AMONG ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

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Abstract: A significant feature of our changing society is the transformation taking place in the country's demographic profile. India is expected to have 34.33 percent share of youth in total population by 2020. By 2030, the target date for the sustainable development goals, the number of youth is projected to have grown by 7 percent, to nearly 1.3 billion. Youth are the most important and dynamic segment of the population in any country. Our nation is witnessing a historic demographic shift and India's ability to find its rightful place in the community of nations depends upon how well we as a nation, can harness the latent power of the young people of our country. Considering this need the present study focuses on the need for strength based interventions among youth. The researcher had employed a one group pre-test post-test pre experimental design and tested the impact of a strength based social work intervention among a group of youth drop outs. The results of the study point out to the need and importance of such interventions among the youth cohort.

IndexTerms – Life skills, strength based intervention, youth

I. INTRODUCTION

“A significant feature of our changing society is the transformation taking place in the country's demographic profile. As a people, we are growing younger. Youth in India constitute a sizable, vibrant and resourceful segment of our society who is fired with the desire to scale greater heights. Children and youth are our hope for tomorrow. There can be no greater cause, no better investment, no greater priority for development consensus than bringing the needs, rights and expectations of the youth to the centre-stage of development concern. It is our duty to rekindle the imagination of our youth so that the nation surges ahead with added strength and vigour”. (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 2012).

The number of young people globally is about to become the largest in history relative to the adult population. At present, more than 50 percent of the population is under the age of 25, or just over three billion individuals are youth or children. In terms of youth alone (age 15 – 24), there are over 1.3 billion youth in the world today. This means that approximately one person in five is between the age of 15 and 24 years, or 17 percent of the world's population is "youth". India is expected to have 34.33 percent share of youth in total population by 2020. By 2030, the target date for the sustainable development goals, the number of youth is projected to have grown by 7 percent, to nearly 1.3 billion. (UN Report 2015). According to the document produced by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, in 2013, about 225 million youth, or 20 percent of all youth in the developing world, are “idle” – not in education, employment or training.

1.1 The favorable demographic dividend

India lies on the cusp of a demographic transition, which would add to the existing base of potential available work force. However, in order to capture this demographic dividend, it is essential that the economy has the ability to support the increase in the labour force and the youth have the appropriate education, skills, health awareness and other enablers to productively contribute to the economy (National Youth Policy document, 2014).

In India, youth in the age group of 15-29 years comprise 27.5 percent of the population. India is expected to become the 4th largest economy by 2025, contributing about 5.5 – 6 percent to the world GDP, only after the United States, China and Japan. While most of these countries face the risk of an ageing workforce, India is expected to have a very favourable demographic profile. The population of India is expected to exceed 1.3 billion by 2020 with a median age of 28 which is considerably less than the expected median ages of China and Japan. The working population of India, is expected to increase to 592 million by 2020, next only to China (776 million), pointing to the fact that youth will make a significant contribution to the economic development of the country. This ‘demographic dividend’ offers a great opportunity to India.

Youth being enthusiastic, vibrant, innovative and dynamic in nature is the most important section of the population. Youth shows strong passion, motivation and will power which also make them the most valuable human resource for

fostering economic, cultural and political development of a nation. A country's ability and potential for growth is determined by the size of its youth population. Their role in building nation's defense is unquestionably agreed upon. The energy and passion of the youth if utilized properly can bring huge positive change to the society and progress to the nation. Youth are the creative digital innovators in their communities and participate as active citizens, eager to positively contribute to sustainable development. This section of the population needs to be harnessed, motivated, skilled and streamlined properly to bring rapid progress for the country. (Youth in India, 2017. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation Government of India).

1.2 Need to nurture Youth for Nation's Development

In the past, young people in developing countries often had to quickly jump from being children to playing adult roles out of necessity. But the economic, cultural, and demographic influences of globalization have delayed the transition to adulthood giving them more time to learn and to engage in civic activities. Compared with the same age group 20 years ago, young people in the developing world are now more likely to enrol in school and to spend more years there postponing entry into the labour force and delaying marriage and childbearing. But they are also exposed to more ideas that may clash with traditional values, and to information about global inequities. Among young women in many developing nations, mortality and morbidity related to pregnancy and childbirth and to unsafe abortions are still huge health risks.

This cohort is healthier, more urbanised and better educated than earlier generations; at the same time, they face significant risks related to child labour and hazardous labour, unemployment and underemployment, substance abuse and other delinquent behaviours, trafficking, sex trade, HIV and even terrorism. These vulnerabilities remain poorly understood and served, and it is only over the last decade or so that researchers and policy makers have begun to shed their traditional ambivalence to these issues. Even so, evidence is practically non-existent that identifies the factors that protect young people's ability to ensure safe living conditions and their autonomy to make informed and wanted decisions. Today, the youth in India form one of the most vulnerable groups, who on the one hand are expected to be the leaders to determine the destiny of India, and on the other hand, are an exploited and confused group.

Urbanisation, migration and globalisation paved way for more trafficking, exploitation and delinquencies. Alternative family patterns and environmental pressures have added to the high risk environments this cohort is likely to be exposed to. Despite the developmental initiatives and accessibility to the resources most of these young adults tend to drop out from education. They form the breeding grounds for youth unrest, unemployment and many other social problems.

Environmental, social and economic opportunities and risks are becoming harder to predict. The dynamic landscape overall is becoming far more complex. Development thinking, knowledge and experience are available from a wider array of sources and providers. While the complexity of today's social, economic, political and environmental issues constitutes a significant challenge, it also offers tremendous opportunities for youth to show their strengths as a strong self-organizing force with the potential for innovation and for embracing change.

Decisive steps should be taken to ensure that more youth in the Third World acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive as adults and to compete for a wider array of jobs in the global marketplace. If they are well-prepared, the adolescents and young adults in developing nations can benefit from the global forces that are transforming their worlds.

1.3 Social Work intervention through Life Skill approach

Social Work Intervention is a professional training based on the scientific knowledge, techniques, approaches and methods of social work tailor made to suit the needs of different target populations. It is a professional problem solving approach to help individuals to help themselves by enhancing their personal and social functioning. It helps individuals, groups and communities to realise their true potential and resources in order to balance their person – situation context. The primary objective of Social Work Intervention is to help people lead a healthy, normal, positive and personally satisfying and socially sanctioned life.

Life skills are abilities that facilitate the physical, mental and emotional well-being of an individual and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. Life skill education provides individuals with strategies to make healthy choices that contribute to a meaningful life. It helps the young people to take positive actions to protect themselves and to contribute effectively for personal as well as nation's development. With life skills, one is able to explore alternatives, weigh pros and cons and make rational decisions in solving each problem or issue as it arises.

The review of the researches and interventions done with Life Skills reveal that Life skill education has been used more as a remedial, curative and problem solving approach in dealing with mental health issues like depression; behaviour problems like aggression, self-destructive behaviour, substance abuse (Puspakumarag, 2013); social problems like poverty, teenage pregnancy and spread of HIV/AIDS (Lineo. Kolosoa, Institute of Development Management–Lesotho, 2009). The Life Skill Education programmes have wide ranging objectives as they address the psychosocial factors that affect behaviour. Researches by Kirby, Kreuter (1991), Caplan (1992), LaFromboise (1994), Ennett (1994), and many others all indicated that Life Skills Education was very successful, in equipping and preparing the individuals to face the challenges of their adult years (cited by Richard, 2011).

Also these studies have evidences that Life Skills have helped the subjects to enhance psycho-social competencies (Vranda and Rao, 2011), pro-social behaviour, emotional and social adjustment, academic self-concept, achievement motivation (Pakdaman et al., 2013), self-confidence, self-esteem (Gadezade et al. 2011) and self-efficacy, employability skills and quality of life. Review of the empirical literature gave insight into utilizing social work intervention through Life skills as a strength based approach in developing and empowering individuals.

II. METHODOLOGY

The researcher has used a one group pre-test post-test pre experimental design to find out the impact of the strength based social work intervention through life skill approach among youth drop outs. The researcher had administered life skill assessment tool developed by Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Chennai. After assessing their life skills, the researcher had done intervention among them with 10 core life skills using the intervention model developed by Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Chennai. After the intervention, post I assessment and post II assessment of life skills were done. The results revealed the need for such interventions for youth.

III. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Comparison of the mean scores (aggregate)

The following table shows the comparison of the aggregate scores of the Life Skills of the respondents in the pre, post I and post II intervention phases. The level of Life Skills (aggregate) showed significant growth in the post II phase, when compared to the post I intervention phase. This shows that the respondents have internalized and acquired the skills over the period of time and is proved to be sustainable as the scores of the post II intervention phase depicted. The table below shows the mean values of Life Skills (aggregate) of the respondents in the pre, post I and post II intervention phases.

Comparison of the mean scores of the Life Skills (aggregate) in pre-test, post-test I and post-test II

Variable	Pre Test		Post Test I		Post Test II	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Life Skill	334.24	17.495	335.49	18.107	358.61	12.967

It is inferred from the table that the means score of Life Skills during the pre-test is 334.24 which is increased to 335.49 immediately after the intervention, leading to a mean difference of -1.244. This was further increased to 358.61 after the intervention, the mean difference being -23.122. On comparison of the mean scores of baseline pre-test score and post-test II score, there was a mean difference of -24.366 which states the effectiveness of the intervention.

3.2 Paired T test

To find out whether the intervention has brought any changes in the level of Life Skills of the respondent youth, the researcher had tested the Life Skill scores of Pre-intervention phase with the Post II intervention phase using paired T test (Dependent T test). The results indicated that the intervention had brought significant positive outcomes. Table below shows the result of the paired T test of the Life Skill (aggregate) scores of pre and post II intervention Phases.

Results of the paired T test of the Life Skill (aggregate) scores of the respondents in the pre and post II intervention phases

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Life Skills pre and post II	-24.366	11.216	1.752	-27.906	-20.826	-13.911	40	.000

The results of the dependent t-test (paired sample T test) shows significant changes in the levels of Life skills among the youth ($t_{(df=40)} = -13.911$; $p < .01$). On further analysis using the same paired sample T test (dependent t test), the mean differences of post-test I-post-test II in Life Skill levels were also found statistically significant ($t_{(df=40)} = -7.778$, $p < .01$). But the difference between the mean scores of pre-test and post-test I was not statistically significant. This means that Life Skills showed a sustained increase after the intervention, though it did not significantly increase immediately after the intervention.

IV. CONCLUSION

Youth being the most vibrant and productive segment of the society, has to be provided equal opportunities and better quality of life to contribute for the nation's development. Knowledge and education are key factors to the full and effective participation of youth in the processes of social, economic and political development. Increased attention to improving participation rates of young people, particularly marginalized youth, is needed to ensure that they acquire the knowledge, capacities, skills and ethical values needed to fulfil their role as agents of development, good governance, social inclusion, tolerance and peace. Unless this young group is given appropriate opportunities for their personal growth, development and empowerment, this immense potential and valuable energy cannot be harnessed. The researcher hopes that this study would lead to further exploration and replication of such approaches to mould our youth for their personal as well as nation's development.

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