ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION AMONG SCHOOL DROPOUT CHILDREN

(A Study Among Institutionalized Children In Coimbatore)

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Abstract

School dropout remains a serious social and educational issue among socio-economically disadvantaged children. Life Skills Education is implemented in child-care institutions to strengthen psychosocial competencies. This study assesses its effectiveness among 80 school dropout children using LSAS and SDRI scales. Correlation and ANOVA were applied. Findings revealed a weak and non-significant relationship ($r = 0.131$, $p > 0.05$).

Index Terms – Life Skills Education, School Dropout Risk, Psychosocial Competence, Social Work Intervention.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in the overall development of children by enhancing their intellectual, emotional, and social capacities. However, many children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds discontinue schooling due to factors such as poverty, family instability, academic difficulties, and lack of support. School dropout increases vulnerability to exploitation, low self-esteem, and limited future opportunities, making it a significant social and developmental concern.

Life Skills Education has been introduced as a preventive and promotive strategy to strengthen children's psychosocial competencies. Life skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, communication, emotional regulation, and coping abilities help children manage academic and social challenges effectively. Strengthening these competencies is expected to improve resilience and support educational continuity.

Despite the growing implementation of life skills programmes in child-care institutions and NGO-based centres, limited empirical evidence exists regarding their effectiveness in reducing school dropout risk. Therefore, the present study assesses the effectiveness of Life Skills Education among school dropout children and examines its relationship with School Dropout Risk.

For this study secondary data has been collected. From the website of KSE the monthly stock prices for the sample firms are obtained from Jan 2010 to Dec 2014. And from the website of SBP the data for the macroeconomic variables are collected for the period of five years. The time series monthly data is collected on stock prices for sample firmsand relative macroeconomic variables for the period of 5 years. The data collection period is ranging from January 2010 to Dec 2014. Monthly prices of KSE - 100 Index is taken from yahoo finance.

Keywords:

Life Skills Education, School Dropout Risk, Psychosocial Competence, Institutionalized Children, Educational Retention, Social Work Intervention, Community Development.

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL DROPOUTS

The phenomenon of school dropout has evolved over time alongside social, economic, and educational changes. In earlier periods, access to formal education was limited, particularly among economically weaker sections and marginalized communities. Education was often considered secondary to livelihood responsibilities, and children frequently engaged in household or income-generating activities. As a result, discontinuation of schooling was not always viewed as a critical social issue.

With modernization and the expansion of compulsory education policies, schooling became recognized as a fundamental right and an essential tool for social mobility and economic development. Consequently, school dropout emerged as a major concern, especially among disadvantaged populations. Research began to identify multiple interrelated factors contributing to dropout, including poverty, academic failure, lack of motivation, family instability, peer influence, and institutional barriers.

In contemporary contexts, school dropout is understood as a gradual and multidimensional process rather than a sudden event. It often develops through accumulated academic difficulties, emotional stress, poor school attachment, and socio-economic constraints. Understanding the development of school dropouts is essential for designing preventive and rehabilitative interventions that address both psychosocial and structural determinants of educational discontinuation.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The conceptual framework of the present study provides a theoretical structure explaining the relationship between Life Skills Education and School Dropout Risk among school dropout children. It identifies the independent variable, dependent variable, and the influence of selected socio-demographic factors. The framework is grounded in the understanding that the development of psychosocial competencies plays a critical role in enhancing children's resilience and reducing vulnerability to educational discontinuation.

Life Skills Education, promoted globally by organizations such as UNICEF, emphasizes the development of essential life competencies including self-awareness, problem solving, decision-making, emotional regulation, communication skills, critical thinking, and coping strategies. These skills equip children to effectively manage personal, academic, and social challenges. When children develop strong life skills, they are better able to adapt to school environments, maintain positive peer relationships, manage stress, and make constructive decisions regarding their education. In the present study, Life Skills Education is considered the Independent Variable, as it is the primary factor assumed to influence change.

The study assumes that structured life skills interventions enhance children's internal capacities, thereby improving their overall adjustment and motivation toward education

IV. Data and Sources of Data

The present study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected directly from the respondents through a structured questionnaire and standardized scales, namely the Life Skills Assessment Scale (LSAS) and the School Dropout Risk Index (SDRI). The data were gathered through direct interaction with the school dropout children in the selected child-care institutions and NGO-based centres after obtaining necessary permission from the concerned authorities. Secondary data were collected from books, academic journals, research articles, institutional reports, and reliable online sources. These sources provided the theoretical foundation and supported the interpretation of the findings of the study.

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study is guided by the **Life Skills Theory**, which emphasizes that psychosocial competencies play a crucial role in an individual's ability to adapt and function effectively in society. According to this perspective, children who possess well-developed life skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, communication, emotional regulation, and coping abilities are better equipped to manage stress, overcome challenges, and adjust to structured environments like schools.

The theory suggests that deficits in psychosocial skills increase vulnerability to emotional distress, academic disengagement, and maladjustment, which may contribute to school dropout. Conversely, strengthening life skills enhances resilience, self-confidence, and motivation, thereby supporting educational continuity.

In the present study, Life Skills Education is considered the independent variable, while School Dropout Risk is treated as the dependent variable. The framework assumes that improvement in life skills can positively influence children's behaviour, coping capacity, and academic engagement, thereby reducing their vulnerability to educational discontinuation.

VI. EQUATIONS

1. *Pearson's Correlation Coefficient*

To examine the relationship between Life Skills Education and School Dropout Risk, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) was used.

$$r = \frac{\sum(X - \bar{X})(Y - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{\sum(X - \bar{X})^2 \sum(Y - \bar{Y})^2}}$$

Where:

X = Life Skills Score

Y = School Dropout Risk Score

$\bar{X}$ = Mean of Life Skills Score

$\bar{Y}$ = Mean of Dropout Risk Score

The value of **r** ranges between -1 and +1. A positive value indicates direct relationship, while a negative value indicates inverse relationship.

2. *One-Way ANOVA Formula*

To test differences between groups (e.g., class/standard), One-Way ANOVA was applied.

$$F = \frac{MS_{between}}{MS_{within}}$$

Where:

MS between = Mean Square Between Groups

MS within = Mean Square Within Groups

If the significance value (p) is less than 0.05, the difference is considered statistically significant.

VII. Life Skills Education Scale (LSAS)

The Life Skills Education Scale (LSAS) is a standardized assessment tool designed to measure the level of psychosocial competencies among children and adolescents. The scale evaluates core life skill domains such as self-awareness, decision-making, problem-solving, communication skills, interpersonal relationships, emotional regulation, coping with stress, and critical thinking.

The LSAS consists of structured statements covering different dimensions of life skills. Respondents are required to indicate their responses based on a predefined rating scale. Each response is assigned a numerical score, and the total score is calculated by summing all item scores. The overall score reflects the respondent's level of life skills competence.

Higher total scores indicate stronger psychosocial skills and better adaptive functioning, while lower scores suggest limited life skills development. The scale enables quantitative measurement and comparison of life skills levels among respondents. In the present study, the LSAS was used to assess the effectiveness of life skills education among school dropout children.

VIII. School Dropout Risk Index (SDRI)

The **School Dropout Risk Index (SDRI)** used in the present study is based on the conceptual framework developed by **Rumberger and Lim (2008)**. Their research identified multiple academic, personal, family, and environmental factors contributing to school dropout vulnerability.

The SDRI measures the level of dropout risk by assessing dimensions such as:

- Academic performance
- School engagement
- Emotional and behavioural factors
- Family background
- Socio-economic conditions
- Institutional and environmental barriers

Each item in the index is scored according to a predefined rating pattern, and the total score indicates the level of vulnerability. Higher scores represent greater dropout risk, while lower scores indicate reduced vulnerability.

IX. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a descriptive research design with a quantitative research approach to assess the effectiveness of Life Skills Education among school dropout children. The descriptive design was used to analyse the existing levels of life skills and school dropout risk without manipulating any variables, while the quantitative approach enabled statistical measurement and objective interpretation of data.

The study followed the census method of sampling. Since the total number of school dropout children available in the selected child-care institutions and NGO-based centres was limited and accessible, all eligible respondents were included in the study. Therefore, the total number of respondents was 80, and the entire population within the selected institutions formed the sample of the study.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire along with standardized tools namely the Life Skills Assessment Scale (LSAS) and the School Dropout Risk Index (SDRI). The collected data were analyzed using statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, Pearson's correlation, and ANOVA.

9.1 UNIVERSE OF THE STUDY

The Universe of The Study Refers to the Total Population That Satisfies the Criteria Defined for the research. In the present study, the universe consists of all school dropout children who are currently associated with selected child-care institutions and NGO-based centres in the study area. These children have discontinued formal schooling and are receiving life skills education within institutional settings.

Since the total number of eligible respondents within the selected institutions was limited and accessible, the study adopted the census method. Therefore, all school dropout children available in the selected institutions during the period of study were included, forming the total sample of 80 respondents.

9.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the socio-demographic profile of the respondents.
2. To assess the level of Life Skills Education among the respondents.
3. To assess the level of school dropout risk among the respondents.
4. To examine the association and relationship between socio-demographic variables, Life Skills Education, and school dropout risk.
5. To analyze and interpret the relationship between Life Skills Education and school dropout risk among the respondents

9.2 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study is confined to selected child-care institutions and NGO-based centers in the specified study area. It focuses exclusively on school dropout children who are currently receiving life skills education within these institutional settings. The study does not include children studying in regular schools or those outside institutional care. The research examines three major components: socio-demographic characteristics, level of life skills, and level of school dropout risk. Socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, family background, parental occupation, family income, and educational status are considered to understand the background profile of the respondents. The study primarily aims to analyze the relationship between Life Skills Education and School Dropout Risk among these children. 24 The scope is limited to the data collected during the study period and does not include long-term follow-up to assess sustained impact. The findings are applicable only to similar institutional contexts and cannot be generalized to all school dropout children in other regions or settings.

9.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

School dropout is a serious issue-affecting children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Many children discontinue schooling due to poverty, family instability, lack of parental support, academic stress, and emotional difficulties. These challenges weaken their confidence, coping ability, and motivation to continue education, resulting in interrupted schooling and poor adjustment to formal learning environments. Life Skills Education is widely used by child-care institutions and educational programmes to support children facing such difficulties. It aims to develop essential skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, communication, emotional regulation, and stress management. These skills are expected to help children cope with academic pressure, adjust socially, and sustain their interest in education. However, despite the increasing use of Life Skills Education programmes, there is limited empirical evidence to show whether these interventions actually improve life-skills levels and reduce school dropout risk. Many programmes are implemented without systematic evaluation using standardized assessment tools. This creates a gap in understanding the real impact of life skills education on children's educational continuity. Therefore, the present study attempts to assess the effectiveness of Life Skills Education by examining its relationship with school dropout risk. The study also seeks to understand how socio-demographic factors influence life-skills levels and dropout risk among children. Addressing this problem is essential for strengthening educational interventions and improving child-centered social work practices.

9.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study adopts a descriptive research design. This design is used to describe the existing conditions of school dropout children in selected institutions. It is suitable for assessing life skills levels and school dropout risk without manipulating the variables. The design allows systematic data collection and helps in analyzing the relationship between Life Skills Education and School Dropout Risk.

9.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The collected data were carefully coded, classified, and tabulated in a systematic manner for analysis. Simple statistical tools such as frequency and percentage were used to describe the socio-demographic profile and variable distribution. Correlation analysis was applied to examine the relationship between Life Skills Education and School Dropout Risk. The analysis helped in interpreting the results objectively, and the findings were presented clearly using tables for better understanding

9.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Every research study has certain limitations that may influence the scope and interpretation of the findings. The present study is subject to the following limitations: 1. The study is limited to selected child-care institutions and NGO-based centres, and therefore the findings cannot be generalized to all school dropout children in other regions. 2. The sample size consists of 80 respondents, which may limit the broader applicability of the results. 3. The study adopted the census method within selected institutions only, and it does not include school dropouts outside these centers

X. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Life Skills Score	80	68.42	8.35
School Dropout Risk	80	54.16	7.92

The table shows moderate levels of Life Skills and Dropout Risk among respondents.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the major study variables. The mean score of Life Skills (M = 68.42, SD = 8.35) indicates that the respondents possess a moderate level of psychosocial competencies. Similarly, the mean score of School Dropout Risk (M = 54.16, SD = 7.92) reflects a moderate level of vulnerability among the respondents. The relatively balanced standard deviation values suggest that the scores are moderately dispersed around the mean, indicating consistency in responses across the sample.

The moderate life skills level suggests that institutional interventions and life skills training programmes may have contributed positively to enhancing decision-making ability, emotional regulation, communication skills, and coping mechanisms among the children. However, the presence of moderate dropout risk indicates that psychosocial improvement alone may not completely eliminate vulnerability related to structural and socio-economic challenges.

Table 2: Correlation between Life Skills and Dropout Risk

Variables	Life Skills	Dropout Risk
Life Skills	1	0.131*
Dropout Risk	0.131*	1

Correlation value r = 0.131 (p > 0.05) indicates a weak and non-significant relationship.

Table 2 shows the correlation between Life Skills Education and School Dropout Risk. The correlation coefficient (r = 0.131, p > 0.05) indicates a weak and statistically non-significant relationship between the two variables. Although a slight positive association is observed, it is not strong enough to establish a meaningful statistical relationship. This finding implies that Life Skills Education, while beneficial for personal development, may not independently determine dropout vulnerability. School dropout appears to be influenced by multiple interacting factors such as poverty, family instability, academic stress, travel difficulties, and lack of sustained motivation.

Table 3: ANOVA – Life Skills by Class

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	5.758	2	2.879	0.05	.909
Within Groups	2325.792	77	30.205		
Total	2331.550	79			

Since p = .909 (>0.05), there is no significant difference in Life Skills levels across class groups.

Table 3 presents the ANOVA results examining differences in Life Skills levels based on class/standard. The significance value (p = .909) is greater than the 0.05 level, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in Life Skills scores across different class groups. This suggests that life skills competencies are relatively consistent among respondents irrespective of their academic level. It may indicate uniform exposure to life skills programmes within the institutional setting.

Overall, the findings suggest that while Life Skills Education strengthens psychosocial competencies, reducing school dropout risk requires a broader, multi-dimensional intervention approach. Life skills training should be integrated with academic support, parental involvement, counselling services, and socio-economic assistance to effectively address dropout vulnerability.

XI. CONCLUSION

The present study assessed the effectiveness of Life Skills Education among school dropout children and examined its relationship with School Dropout Risk. The findings show that respondents possess moderate levels of life skills, indicating that life skills programmes contribute positively to psychosocial development such as decision-making, communication, and emotional regulation.

However, the correlation analysis revealed a weak and non-significant relationship between Life Skills Education and School Dropout Risk ($r = 0.131$, $p > 0.05$). This suggests that life skills training alone may not be sufficient to significantly reduce dropout vulnerability. School dropout is influenced by multiple factors including socio-economic conditions, family environment, academic challenges, and structural barriers.

Therefore, while Life Skills Education remains an important intervention strategy, effective dropout prevention requires a comprehensive approach that integrates psychosocial support with economic, familial, and institutional measures.

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