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A study on life skills among high school adolescents studying in English and Tamil medium in government school

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Abstract--The present study aimed to assess the level of life skills in high school adolescents and investigate the impact of the medium of instruction on life skills. The objective of the present study was to compare the life skills of high school adolescents in the medium of instruction, namely Tamil and English Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The sample comprised 380 high school adolescents studying in class 8, in the age group 13-14 years from Schools in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. It was hypothesized that the students in the mother tongue medium (Tamil) and those who studied in English medium do not differ significantly on the measure of life skills. To measure life skills, Life skills Assessment scale with 100 items was used. It was found that most of the adolescents had average life skills, very few had high life skills, and some had low life skills, thus indicating the need for including life skills training program as a part of the curriculum. The results from the t-test showed a significant difference in life skills of high school adolescents with the medium of instruction, and the adolescents in Tamil Medium had comparatively better life skills than their English counterparts.

Keywords---adolescence, life skills, medium instruction.

Introduction

Language refers to the method of communication, and it also refers to the system of communication of a community or country. In a school setting, medium of instruction refers to the specific language used for teaching in the classroom. English medium refers to the educational system wherein "English" is the primary

mode of instruction where "English" is not the students' mother tongue. Mother tongue medium of instruction refers to the language that is the first language or the home language of the students in which the education is taught primarily.

The objective of school education is to help students accomplish their educational goals and help them move forward toward a rewarding career. The language of instruction in schools refers to the medium through which the concepts are taught to students. Usually, the local vernacular or official language stands as the medium of instruction in school. Research emphasizes favoring the mother tongue as the medium of instruction to help the psychological mind work automatically for better understanding (Srivastava and Khatoon 1980), socially be recognized among the members of the community, and educationally learn more quickly than other linguistic mediums. But to ensure competence and keep pace with the updates, many education systems use the English medium of instruction globally. According to Policymakers and researchers, learning through bilingual education is said to slow cognitive development and have long-term adverse effects on educational achievement in children (UNESCO 1953, Senapati, Patnaik and Dash 2012). It was until the early 80's that the research concluded developmental problems or delays to be the adverse outcomes of bilingual education. Until recently research in areas such as educational neuroscience, psychology, and audiology emphasized the positive consequences of bilingualism. It further added that bilingual educated children and monolingual educated children (mother tongue) had a remarkable difference in acquiring new languages and a positive edge in intelligence and cognitive growth (Coneau, Genesee and Medelson 2007, Roseberry and Brice 2000, Iozzi and Surian, 2009). Studies have also shown that there was no beneficial or detrimental effect on one's abilities at the cognitive or academic level if educated or instructed in English medium or any other medium than his mother tongue (Bialstok, Craik, Klein and Viswanathan 2004, Yoshida 2008).

Studies by Sunitha and Khadi (2007) on a comparison of students from English medium and Mother tongue medium showed that English medium school students have a higher level of student involvement, with highly qualified teachers and better parental encouragement, and better academic achievement. Ramasamy (2001) highlights that nonverbal intelligence and achievement were superior among English medium students and Verbal intelligence and achievement were prominent among students instructed in their Mother tongue.

Srivatsa and Khatoon (1984) investigation revealed that students instructed in the English medium scored better in non-verbal intelligence and the three dimensions of verbal creativity (fluency, flexibility, and originality) than their counterparts. According to Srivatsava and Ramasamy (1986), English medium students scored high on nonverbal intelligence, and mother tongue medium scored high on verbal creativity.

Yela (1975) highlighted that simple and direct strategies on verbal problems involving reflective thoughts were employed by students taught in their mother tongue as opposed to their counterparts who engaged in complex and indirect ones. Research studies in Hong Kong have also shown the effect of the medium of instruction on the attitudes, motivation, and academic performance with relevant

socio-cultural contextual factors on secondary school-going students. It is found that Mother tongue instruction was seen as a contributor to a unique and more positive impact than studying high power second language (English) among students. Mother tongue instructors had a better self-concept with a higher level of internalization. Along with education, there are prime requisites such as skills for life that can be acquired.

Life skills

Life skills are "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviors that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges in everyday life" (WHO 1997). It has been estimated by WHO that one in every five students will face an emotional or behavioral disorder irrespective of their enriched lifestyle at some point in their youth. Children with disturbed Emotions have impaired performance academically, poor self-image, and poor relationship issues with peers and adults. They may also have little respect for law and society.

Psychosocial skills are skills that help promote competence to face the challenges of life on day to day basis. Acquiring life skills is vital in one's life to foster thinking, social and coping skills and critically evaluate situations, and arrive at formal decisions. When mastered, life skills help overcome obstacles through adolescence's developmental phase. Adolescence is characterized by physical, cognitive, and psychological changes and is referred to as a period of storm and stress. The prime task in adolescence is to perform well in academics and establish and gear themselves towards goals and be career-oriented.

Failure to learn in school may result in academic failure and social rejection having lasting consequences and limiting the chance to succeed in the future (Hendren R, BirellWeisen R, Orley JH 1994). To improve mental health and check on emotional problems, school students have to be exposed to the essentials of mental health and trained to enhance life skills. According to Who, the core life skills that adolescents be taught are self-awareness, empathy, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, creative thinking, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision making, coping with stress, and coping with emotion.

The developmental years encompass the school environment, which is also the best environment to combine academics with a life skills program to learn the thinking, social and coping skills for guidance, support, and direction. Thus, the ideal institution for imparting life skills in school, and research has shown that life skills programs result in better self-esteem, adequate coping, and better adjustment, resulting in pro-social behavior (Srikala B, Kumar KVK 2011). Positive changes in classroom behavior and interaction were also noted. Research studies show that there was a promotion in self-esteem, peace education, self-confidence among students (Aparna and Rakhee, 2011), prevention of antisocial behavior (Botvin GJ, Baker E, Botvin EM, Filazzola AD, Millman RB, 1984), enhanced well-being, and as a tool for primary prevention. (Karamadi and Aminabhavi 2015)

Life skills help individuals translate acquired knowledge, attitudes, and values into practical abilities for behaving in healthy ways. Research studies also show

that imparting life skills training improved academic performance. (1984). Several studies have demonstrated the impact of instruction in the mother tongue on variables like self-efficacy, cognitive processes, academic achievement, and achievement motivation, but investigating the effect of mother tongue instruction over English on life skills is negligible. Therefore the present study is aimed to assess the level of life skills of high school adolescents based on their medium of instruction, either English or their mother tongue. (Jisha 2016)

Aim

To assess the life skills of high school adolescents in Tamil and English medium of instruction in the Government school.

Objectives

To assess the Life skills among high school adolescents in Mother Tongue (Tamil) MOI (Medium of instruction) and English medium.

Hypothesis

There exists no significant difference in life skills among high school adolescents pursuing education in the Mother tongue medium (Tamil) and English medium.

Methodology

Sample

A purposive sample of 380 students studying in class 8 was selected for the present study. The sample comprised 190 students from Mother Tongue medium (Tamil) and 190 students from English medium with equal boys and girls in both the groups from Government schools in Chennai.

Tools Used

The multi-dimensional Life skills assessment scale (Subasree, Nair, and Ranjan, 2010) measures the ten core Life skills and the overall Global life skills among adolescents. The multi-dimensional life skills assessment scale consists of 100 items as statements. It is a self-administered questionnaire, and the responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale, having five response categories, Always true of me -5, Very true of me-4, sometimes true of me-3, Occasionally true of me -2, Not at all true of me -1. The positive items are scored from 5 to 1, and the negative items are scored from 1 to 5. The tool comprises 64 positive items and 36 negative items. The tool is applicable to be administered in individual and group settings. Scores of 324 and below are called low scorers, scores between 325 and 386 are termed Average scorers, and scores of 387 and above are termed, high scorers. High scores indicate better life skills. The reliability coefficient alpha is found to be 0.84 and the validity of the tool is 0.89.

Procedure

The sample for the present study has been collected from 380 students. The purpose and nature of the study were explained to the school's headmaster, and the permission to administer the scale to the students was sought. After establishing rapport with the students, the life skills assessment scale was administered to a group of 20-25 students simultaneously and ensured that all the items were filled out completely.

Statistical Techniques

The following statistical techniques were used for the analysis of the data

Mean and Standard Deviation

Percentage Analysis

t-test (Test of significance to find the difference of means)

Results

The results in Table 1 show that among the total sample of 380 students, 51% of them had average life skills, 47% of students exhibited low scores on life skills, and 2% possessed high scores on life skills. Among the adolescents who had mother tongue MOI, 61% showed average life skills, 36% showed low scores on life skills, and 3% showed high scores on life skills. Among the adolescents who studied in the English medium, 41% had average scores on life skills, 58% had low scores on life skills, and 1% had high scores on life skills. Overall it can be observed that very few adolescents have a high level of life skills. The table also shows that the number of adolescents with low scores is greater in the English medium than in the Tamil medium, thereby confirming that 111 out of 190 adolescents have scored low on life skills compared to 68 out of 190 adolescents with low scores in Tamil MOI. 116 adolescents out of 190 in the Tamil MOI have average scores on life skills compared to 78 adolescents out of 190 English MOI. Though very few adolescents have scored high on life skills, adolescents in the Tamil MOI have relatively more adolescents (6 nos) compared to just one (one no.) high scorer in English MOI. The overall comparison of adolescents in Tamil Medium and English MOI indicates that adolescents in Tamil MOI had better life skills than adolescents in English MOI. The results clearly show the critical need to enhance the life skills of adolescents as there are more low scorers and negligible high scorers in life skills among adolescents.

Table – 1
Level of life skills in High school adolescents

Scores On Life Skills	English MOI	% in English MOI	Tamil MOI	% in Tamil MOI
Low	111	58	68	36
Average	78	41	116	61
High	1	1	6	3
Total	190	100	190	100

Table -2
Mean and Standard Deviation of the Two Groups

GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t value	P
1 Tamil	190	332.12	26.179	1.899	3.510	.001
2 English	190	322.94	24.755	1.796		

Table 2 shows the Mean and Standard deviation, standard error, and t and p values. Group 1 Tamil Medium MOI has a Mean value of 332.12 with a standard deviation of 26.179 and with standard error of 1.899. The Group II English Medium MOI has a Mean value of 322.94 with a standard deviation of 24.755 and with standard error of 1.796. On comparing both the groups, using the t-test, the t value was found to be 3.510, which is significant at the p 0.01 level; thus the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in life skills among high school adolescents in Tamil and English Medium MOI is not accepted.

Discussion

Academic excellence is not the only criterion, but along with academics acquiring psychosocial skills is necessary for the overall development of adolescents in school, which is the holistic way of preparing students for life challenges. Schools are inclined towards marks-based evaluation and skills are taken a back seat most of the time. But skills are the abilities that help the adolescents to evade through the phase and have a positive outlook towards life. Mother tongue MOI is not preferred in our country mostly as to meet the standards of education globally English MOI is compulsorily followed in the majority of the Private schools. Education in Mother tongue MOI is lacking these days, and students and parents are more inclined toward English MOI, this the study result reveals the importance of Mother tongue MOI and the comparatively better scores on life skills.

Promotion of life skills assured positivity and well-being of the adolescents. Educating life skills had a positive effect on social development, emotional and social adjustment (Roodbari, Sahdipoor, and Ghale 2013). Studies have also shown that imparting lifeskills training resulted in improved self-esteem, emotional adjustment, and empathy in adolescents (Yadav and Iqbal 2009). The present study result highlights that Tamil MOI had a significantly higher level of life skills than those with Tamil Medium or Mother tongue MOI. The results are contrary to the results of the study by Karamadi and Aminabhavi 2015, which states that English MOI has a significantly higher level of life skills than the Mother tongue MOI.

Findings

- The study shows that there were fewer low scorers on life skills in Tamil MOI.
- The study shows that there were more low scorers on life skills in English MOI

- The study shows that there were more average scorers and high scorers in Tamil MOI
- The study shows that there were fewer average scorers and high scorers in English MOI
- The study shows that adolescents in Tamil MOI have better life skills than the high school adolescents in English MOI.

Conclusion

The study shows that there were fewer low scorers and more average scorers and high scorers on life skills in Tamil MOI. The study shows that adolescents in Tamil MOI have significantly better life skills than the high school adolescents in English MOI.

Limitation

- The sample is restricted to one school in the Chennai district
- The Medium of instruction (MOI) of students was restricted to Tamil and English mediums only
- The study was restricted to class 8 high school adolescents only
- The study was done in Government school only.

Recommendation for Future Research

- The study could be conducted among adolescents from IX, X, or other classes.
- The Study can be conducted by collecting samples from more schools
- The study can be done as a comparative study from rural and urban areas
- The study can include samples from other Mother tongue Medium also

Implications of the study

- The study emphasizes the need for life skills intervention as there are more low scorers in life skills, and high scorers are negligible in both Tamil and English MOI
- The study also highlights that English as a foreign language or official language does not guarantee skills for life so the skill-based study has to be integrated along with the curriculum
- The study points out the need to include life skills as a part of an education program or intervention based study in schools
- The study shows the importance of Mother tongue MOI in educating the adolescents
- The Language differentiation in the acquisition of life skills is highlighted in the study.

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