

Role of Life Skills in Psychosocial Competence

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Abstract:

Life skills are adaptable and positive behavioural characteristics that enable people to deal well with the demands and obstacles of daily life. Teaching life skills as generic skills in the context of everyday life could constitute the cornerstone of life skills education for the enhancement of mental well-being, healthy interaction, and behaviour. On this foundation, further problem-specific abilities could be built, such as assertively dealing with peer temptations to use drugs, have unprotected sex, or become involved in vandalism. The type of life skills will invariably be determined by cultural and societal circumstances. As a result, the precise content of life skills education must be defined at the national or local level. Life skills, on the other hand, are taught in such a diverse range of countries that they appear to be culturally relevant. Children take an active role in the teaching and learning process in life skills education. Working in small groups and pairs, brainstorming, role play, games, and discussions are among the techniques used to encourage active participation. Self-efficacy, self-confidence, and self-esteem are all affected by life skills. As a result, life skills play a critical role in mental health promotion. The promotion of mental health adds to our motivation to care for ourselves and others, the prevention of mental disorders, the improvement of psychosocial competence, and the prevention of health and behaviour problems. Life skills are being touted as critical talents that young people can learn as they grow up and apply to improve their psychosocial abilities.

Key Word: Life skills, psychosocial, competences, mental health.

Date of Submission: 22-04-2022

Date of Acceptance: 06-05-2022

I. Introduction

Today's life requirements, such as rapid socio-cultural changes, shifting family structures, a vast and complex network of human relations and diversity, the expansion and invasion of information resources, have confronted people with challenges, stresses, and numerous pressures, all of which require socio-mental abilities to deal with effectively. People with a lack of emotional, mental, and social talents are more prone to issues and are more likely to develop psychiatric, social, and behavioural disorders (Khalatbari et al., 2011).

Increasing people's psychological capacity, which is accomplished through life skills, is one method for preventing mental and behavioural issues. Life skills are a set of abilities that enable a range of adjustments as well as positive and helpful behaviour. Life skills have been found to reduce drug misuse, avoid violent behaviours, build self-reliance, increase skills to deal with pressures and tensions, and establish healthy and productive social interactions in numerous and thorough studies (Keikhayfarzaneh, 2011). Life skills are important for promoting healthy child and adolescent development, primary prevention of some of the leading causes of child and adolescent death, sickness, and disability, socialization, and preparing young people for changing social situations (Nalla, 2015).

In recent years, life skills education has gotten a lot of attention as a tool for holistic human development that leads to social development. Basic education, gender equality, democracy, good citizenship, child care and protection, education system quality and efficiency, lifelong learning, quality of life, and the promotion of peace are all benefits of life skills education. WHO defined life skills as the adaptable and positive behaviour abilities that allow people to deal well with life's demands and obstacles (WHO, 2020). According to empirical data, individuals with better life skills have better academic, emotional, physical, psychological, and social outcomes. As a result, life skills are now widely used in every field around the world. The goal of including life skills is to help young people acquire appropriate and responsible problem-solving behaviours in their personal lives. Life skills are used in a variety of areas of life responsibilities, including self, family, leisure, community, and work. (10)

II. Importance of life skills

Delores Commission's four pillars of education, which are regarded as the philosophical basis of life skills education, give a framework for incorporating life skills into education (UNESCO, 1996). Life skills,

according to WHO (1997), are the ability (capability) that can be imbibed and enhanced by practice, to transfer information, attitude, and values into adaptive and constructive behaviours, to deal efficiently with the needs and problems of everyday life. Life skills, according to UNICEF-MENA (2017), are a cross-cutting, interrelated, and overlapping application of knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills that are essential to effective education and are universally applicable and contextually relevant.

In a world rife with unprecedented uncertainties and challenges, life skills have never been more important. Life skills have progressed from being considered coping skills to being viewed as transformative competences, allowing individuals to take a proactive role as change agents to address personal and societal difficulties by developing personal agency. Individuals' holistic growth in the cognitive, social, and emotional domains is emphasized, with a focus on the integration of values and attitudes for long-term behaviour change. As a result, the value of life skills as transformative competences in assisting individuals in successfully navigating the difficulties of day-to-day living and achieving self- and other-wellbeing is immeasurable (Nair & Hardikar, 2021).

Basic Life Skills equip people with the tools they need to deal with the challenges and demands of daily life, from regulating their emotions to making educated decisions. It also aids in the development of people's personalities, talents, and mental and physical abilities, as well as the realization of their actual potential, by teaching them to know themselves and others, as well as making effective decisions to live in harmony with one another in society.

Life skills are an important aspect of being able to meet the demands of everyday life in a continuously changing world. People require new life skills, such as the ability to deal with stress and frustration, to cope with the growing pace and change of modern life. People have multiple jobs throughout their life, each with its own set of stresses and requirements for flexibility (Macmillan education, 2019).

Benefits for the individual - The development of life skills aids people in their daily lives by allowing them to:

- Find fresh ways to think about and solve problems.
- Recognize the consequences of their behaviour and teach them to take responsibility for their acts instead of blaming others.
- Build confidence in your speaking abilities as well as in group teamwork and cooperation.
- Analyze options, make judgments, and comprehend why they make specific decisions.
- Develop a stronger feeling of self-awareness and gratitude for others.

Benefits for employment - While many people work hard to achieve decent marks, they nevertheless have difficulty finding work. Employers recognize not only academic success, but also important employability qualities like:

- Self-management, problem-solving, and understanding of the corporate environment
- Working well as part of a group
- Management of time and people
- Agility and flexibility to a variety of positions, as well as the capacity to function in a variety of settings
- Influence as a means of leadership

Benefits for society - Individually, the more we develop life skills, the more they affect and enhance the world we live in:

- It is simpler to cooperate internationally when cultural knowledge and citizenship are recognized.
- Respecting difference enables the growth of creativity and imagination, resulting in a more accepting society.
- Developing negotiation skills, networking abilities, and empathy can aid in the development of resolutions rather than resentments.

III. Life skills and mental health

The life skills approach is both a motivator and a preventative measure. The goal of this is to improve mental health and prevent social-mental stress.

Simply put, mental health refers to one's ability to live a happy, productive, healthy, and trouble-free life. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health encompasses not only the absence of mental illness but also the presence of some form of mental disorder. Individuals who are mentally healthy are those who are able to deal with life's changes and problems, as well as control and be responsible for their lives. They are also able to use their mental abilities and form positive relationships with others, as well as engage in constructive and beneficial activities (WHO, 2020).

Boredom, rebellion, disorientation, peer pressure, and curiosity are all elements that promote high-risk behaviour such as drunkenness, drug misuse, and casual relationships. High-risk behaviour is frequently driven by psychological push factors such as an inability to deal with emotional pain, disputes, frustrations, and future fears. The life skills approach is an effective technique for encouraging young people to act properly, take initiative, and control their own lives. It is founded on the premise that when young people are able to rise above emotional impasses caused by daily conflicts, complex relationships, and peer pressure, they are less likely to engage in antisocial or high-risk behaviour.

Mental health encompasses a wide range of conditions, and there are no promises that if someone has good mental health today, it will remain so in the future. We all face minor and large pressures and strains, such as developmental stages, maturity, sicknesses, economic stress, job loss, noise and bustle, and so on. As a result, we face challenges and difficulties throughout our lives. These problems and difficulties affect our sentiments of happiness and pleasure, as well as our social and mental health. Various programs have been offered to acquire and maintain a desirable degree of mental health, including life skills.

Effective life skill learning and application can influence how we feel about ourselves and others, as well as how we are regarded by others. Our notions of self-efficacy, self-confidence, and self-esteem are influenced by our life skills. As a result, life skills play a significant role in the promotion of mental health. The promotion of mental health adds to our drive to look after ourselves and others, as well as the prevention of mental disorders and health and behaviour issues.

IV. Key life skills

People with life skills can make better decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, develop good relationships, empathize with others, and cope with managing their lives in a healthy and productive way.

Self-awareness, empathy, interpersonal relationships, effective communication, critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, decision making, coping with emotions, and coping with stress are the ten fundamental life skills advocated by the World Health Organization.

Social skills - The abilities that have to do with interacting with others. Personal reflection is linked to thinking skills. Interpersonal abilities are included under social skills, which are not always dependent on rational reasoning.

- Self-awareness - It is the ability to reflect on, evaluate, and accept one's own ideas, feelings, and actions, as well as recognize and acknowledge one's own needs and desires. It entails self-awareness, character development, strengths and weaknesses, as well as desires and dislikes. Self-awareness training can assist us in recognizing when we are worried or under duress. It is frequently a requirement for efficient communication and interpersonal relationships, as well as the development of empathy for others.
- Empathy - It is the ability to briefly put oneself in the shoes of another person, such as a friend, parent, or other, and experience their emotions, comprehend their worries, anxieties, and needs, and feel their feelings. We must comprehend and care for the needs, desires, and feelings of others to have a good relationship with our loved ones and society at large. Empathy can help us tolerate people who are very different from ourselves. This can help to improve social relationships, particularly in circumstances where ethnic or cultural variety exists. Empathy can also stimulate nurturing behaviour toward persons in need of care and assistance, as well as tolerance toward those who are stigmatized and ostracized by the very people who support them. Finally, it assists you in getting closer to discovering answers, resolving issues, and improving your quality of life.
- Interpersonal relationships - It enables us to form positive relationships with those we encounter. It is our ability to form and maintain friendly relationships that can have a significant impact on our mental and social health. It aids in the maintenance of positive relationships with family members, which are a valuable source of social support.
- Effective communication - It's our ability to communicate in ways that are suitable for our cultures and situations, both verbally and nonverbally. This includes the ability to articulate one's thoughts, desires, wants, concerns and anxieties. It also includes the ability to seek guidance and assistance as needed.

Thinking skills - The abilities that are related to thinking. Personal reflection is linked to thinking skills.

- Critical thinking - It is the ability to objectively and rationally examine information, experiences, situations, and circumstances, among other things. Critical thinking can help us notice and examine the elements that influence our attitudes and behaviour, such as values, peer pressure, and so on, which can benefit our health.
- Creative thinking - It allows us to see beyond our immediate experience, even if no problem or decision has been detected. It can assist us in responding to situations in our daily lives more adaptively and flexibly. Both decision-making and problem-solving benefit from creative thinking.

- Problem solving - Problem solving enables us to approach difficulties in our lives in a positive manner. Significant problems that go unsolved can generate mental stress and physical hardship.
- Decision making - It is the ability to choose the best from a variety of alternatives or options in a variety of life situations, analyze the benefits and drawbacks of alternatives, and confidently accept responsibility for the decision's implications. Making decisions assists us in dealing constructively with life decisions.

Emotional skills - Emotional is regarded as a skill that may be used not just to make reasonable decisions but also to persuade others to agree with one's point of view.

- Coping with emotions - It entails identifying emotions in ourselves and others, understanding how emotions influence behaviour and being able to respond appropriately to emotions. If we do not respond appropriately to intense emotions like anger or sadness, they might have a severe impact on our health.
- Coping with stress - Recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how they affect us, and acting in ways that help us control our stress levels by changing our environment or lifestyle and learning how to relax so that tensions caused by unavoidable stress do not lead to health problems are all part of coping with stress.

None of the ten fundamental life skills works without the others, and none of them is effective if practised alone. Individuals need all of their life skills, as well as the skills needed to work productively and generate revenue, in order to function effectively or to reach their full potential. Life skills are enablers for effectively functioning to one's full potential, and when utilized in conjunction with other skills such as employability/citizenship skills, they contribute to the individual's and society's collective well-being.

V. Developing life skills approaches

Life skills are a set of essential tools that enable an individual to live a fulfilling life. Because of their vulnerability to health concerns, these technologies can be utilized by people of all ages, but notably by adolescents. Life skills development is a lifelong process that helps people grow and mature, gain confidence in their judgments based on proper information and thought, and uncover sources of strength both inside and outside of themselves. Since the dawn of humanity, every culture and community has invested in teaching and enabling its younger generation to lead fulfilling and responsible lives. For example, India's 'Panchatantra' stories provide vital Life Skills development lessons that are relevant to all generations.

Whatever approaches a facilitator employs, it is recommended that they be learner-centred, that is, focused on the learners' specific needs, developments, and interests, and that they aid in positive behaviour change.

Before choosing whether method adaptation is a realistic and appropriate solution, it may be helpful to obtain copies of many life skills approaches and analyze them. Even if the ideal option is to develop a life skills program, the process can be made easier by looking over the life skills planner to get ideas for style and content. In addition, even if the ultimate goal is to build rather than adapt a program, real implementation of a life skills approach developed abroad might assist local groups to gain vital expertise in life skills education in the short term.

A significant aspect in deciding whether or not a life skills program can be adapted is the ability to attain cultural relevance and language purity. Another crucial consideration is the cost. When license fees and royalties are added to the adaptation costs, program adaptation is not always cheaper than program development. Furthermore, program adaption can take just as long as the development of the program. The goals and strategy for developing, teaching, implementing, and maintaining life skills programs should all be established in a way that can be supported by the country's financial resources (WHO, 1997).

A life skills program must demonstrate that it is deserving of the resources committed to it. Process and outcome assessment studies should be conducted, and the findings communicated to all relevant decision makers who may have an impact on the life skills program's future. A program that includes a component of continuous evaluation of its use and impact has more flexibility in adapting to changing priorities and is more likely to be adjusted and sustained over time.

VI. Enhancing psychosocial competence through life skills

Competence is defined as the ability to exercise control over one's life, to effectively deal with specific difficulties, and to create adjustments to one's behaviour and environment, rather than simply the ability to adjust or adapt to current conditions. Psychosocial competence refers to a person's ability to retain mental health and exhibit it through adaptive and good behaviour when engaging with others, as well as his or her culture and surroundings.

In terms of physical, mental, and social well-being, psychosocial competence plays a significant role in the promotion of health in its broadest sense. In particular, where health issues are linked to behaviour, and

where the behaviour is linked to an inability to cope well with life's stressors and strains, improving psychosocial competence could be beneficial. This is particularly essential for health promotion at a time when behaviour is increasingly being blamed for health problems. Enhancing a person's coping resources, as well as their personal and social competences, are the most direct strategies for promoting psychosocial competence.

Life skills are the qualities that enable young people to achieve general wellbeing and competence as they face the challenges of life. A set of qualities that promote compatibility power and positive and productive behaviour are referred to as life skills. As a result, the individual is able to assume the obligations of social roles while avoiding harming others, as well as deal with the obstacles and issues of daily life. The beneficial effects of life skills aid in the reduction of psychological issues, the utilization of cognitive and IQ talents and abilities, the prevention of violent behaviours, and the increase of self-reliance and self-esteem (Khalatbari et al., 2011).

Wisdom begins with life skills, which focuses on behaviour transformation or a developmental approach that addresses a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude, and skills. Given the scope and opportunity, these enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitude, and values into practical talents, i.e. what to accomplish and how to do it. Life skills, on the other hand, are not a silver bullet for "how to do" talents because they are not the only things that influence behaviour. Many elements influence motivation and the ability to behave well, including social support, culture, and environment.

Effective development and implementation of Life Skills can have an impact on how we feel about others and ourselves, as well as how we are regarded by others. It aids in the development of self-esteem and self-confidence. Life skills for psychosocial competency must be distinguished from other vital skills that young people will develop as they get older, such as reading, math, technical, and livelihood skills.

The function of life skills in supporting mental health can be proved by the fact that successful learning of life skills affects the learner's feelings about himself and others and changes other people's views toward that individual. As a result, developing life skills affects both the individual and the environment, and these two related principles accelerate the improvement of mental health.

Programs that teach life skills go beyond delivering information. Although it is critical to provide information and reinforce that knowledge on a regular basis, this is rarely sufficient to encourage people to change their behaviour. Life skills programs are designed to improve young people's ability and incentives to use a variety of information sources. Role plays, games, riddles, group debates, and a variety of other instructional strategies are used to enhance their psychosocial competences by keeping the participants fully engaged in the sessions.

The truth is that in all industries, having skills is important. Because "skills" refers to the ability required to do a job well. As a result, woodworking, driving, cooking, painting, and other activities are all considered skills. However, because the purpose of the life skills approach is to improve people's psychological or mental health and prevent social harm, those skills are included in life skills training programs that are relevant to the program's goal.

VII. Applications of life skills

Life skills are a set of skills and abilities that aid individuals in overcoming obstacles and attending to life circumstances and conflicts. These abilities enable an individual to act adaptively and correctly in relation to their surroundings, as well as offer confidence to tackle life's obstacles.

A dynamic teaching technique is used in life skills education. Working in small groups and couples, brainstorming, role plays, games, and discussions are some of the approaches used to encourage active participation.

Life Skills are used in different situations such as:

- Persons must have both thinking and social abilities to negotiate well at home, school, or business.
- When confronted with challenging situations, persons tend to think critically, weigh all of the advantages and disadvantages of the scenario, and think outside the box in order to solve seemingly intractable difficulties.
- As a result of Life Skills, communication barriers between parents and other adults are broken down. It enables young people to deal effectively with stressful situations without losing their cool or becoming moody, to learn to disagree politely and assertively in order to develop positive attitudes and to take firm stands on values, beliefs, and cultural differences.
- When persons learn all of the basic skills to deal with challenges, feel more confident, and motivated, and develop a positive attitude toward life. As a result, they will make more mature and adult-like decisions, begin taking responsibility for their actions, and refrain from risky behaviours, thereby becoming more useful people for the next generation.

To properly manage a certain issue, many life skills are required. In certain ways, it's better to combine different Life Skills. In reality, putting the right set of Life Skills together at the right time is a skill.

VIII. Conclusion

Life skills are the abilities that allow people to engage in adaptive and positive behaviour that allows them to deal with the events and challenges of everyday life, as well as participate in a modern world full of new challenges and handle everything from social interactions to identifying and processing emotions. Life skills are based on a big part of our experiences and how we can pass on that knowledge to future generations in order to learn, preach, and add to their knowledge. However, we are currently seeing a quick change boom and a tremendous revolution in science and technology, which is widening the gap between older and younger generations, particularly in terms of learning and passing on experience, and reaping maximum advantage (The Scientific World, 2019). The usefulness of life skills is in one's ability to adapt to any situation and thrive in the renaissance and prosperity of society.

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Dr. Rituparna Basak. "Role of Life Skills in Psychosocial Competence." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 27(04), 2022, pp. 60-65.