

Investigating the Relationship between Life Skills and Academic Achievement of High School Students

Masuomeh Abdi^{1,*}, Rasol Davoudi²

¹Department of Educational Researches, Zanjan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Zanjan, Iran

²Department of Educational Sciences, Zanjan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Zanjan, Iran

Received: November 11, 2014

Accepted: January 30, 2015

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate the relationship between life skills and academic achievement of high school female students in Zanjan. To achieve this purpose, in addition to theoretical studies and literature review of the study, data were collected by using three types of questionnaire regarding problem-solving skills, decision-making and effective communication and they were reliable 82.0, 89.0 and 78.0 respectively. The study sample consisted of 3418 students from high school female students of Zanjan that among them, 345 participants were selected through stratified random sampling. The study is an applied study in terms of purpose and it is also a descriptive-correlational study in terms of data collection. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and the results showed that the general level of academic achievement and students' triple skills are desirable, but in terms of demographic variables, there is a significant difference among them. The results also indicate that (problem solving, decision-making and effective communication) skills have a significant relationship with academic achievement in addition to that they have the necessary prediction ability for academic achievement variable.

KEYWORDS: Life Skills, Problem-solving Skill, Decision-making Skill, Effective Communication Skill, Academic achievement

INTRODUCTION

Social life, industrial development and massive developments in information technology and media have made the modern man's life change into a confusing and a sophisticated condition that adjustment to these conditions requires knowledge of how to deal with the problems. Dealing with life pressures and achieving personal and social skills, are always part of the reality of human life and manifests in various forms in different periods. Unfortunately, humans are not always in the normal psychosocial development direction and for various reasons, many young people cannot receive external stimuli and cannot balance between the effects of these incentives and inner motivations and consequently harmonious and comprehensive development which is the main purpose of human balance in full or even partial is not fulfilled. So, the more complex a society and the broader interpersonal and social information, there will be more internal and environmental conflicts which consequently cause more perplexity and confusion (Khoshabi et.al, 2011, p.24).

Education is an extensive and time consuming process but it is the most fruitful achievement of human. Its importance can be seen in this respect that human reality is realized and meant by education and in this process human talents and potential capabilities are appearing. Importance of education can also be seen in drawbacks which are caused by the absence of this dynamic movement and human and society suffer from these drawbacks. We need the help of education to solve the social and cultural problems. Providing good and proper education is one of the indicators of social, educational improvement of individuals (Tadayoni, 2001).

Usually mean scores of different lessons is the most common criteria for measuring level of academic achievement because it is more stable and reliable compared to other criteria and also shows academic achievement exactly (Farahani, 1999). Academic achievement relies on different reasons. Various classifications have been done and in one of these classifications individual differences and school-related factors are considered as two general categories influencing academic achievement (Shalviri, 1998).

UNICEF (2003) states that life skills are said to a large group of psychological, social and interpersonal skills which could help people to make informed decisions, to communicate effectively and to develop their own coping skills and personal management and have a healthy, productive life.

Teaching life skills is one of the ways to prevent the prevalence of high risk behaviors and lead to more and better use of the blessings of life and makes life full of dynamism, happiness and freshness (Hematti and Alamdar, 2010).

Some of these skills are examined in the following:

*Corresponding Author: Masuomeh Abdi, Department of Educational Researches, Zanjan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Zanjan, Iran

A) Problem-solving Ability

This ability enables person to solve the life problems effectively and to deal with the life problems constructively. Problem solving requires several activities so that at first we must define problem accurately and exactly and then put together different solutions and finally select and implement the proper solution among possible solutions (Behraves, 2003).

John Dewey (1938), considers problem solving as a voluntary and conscious process and sees it as one of the main goals of education. Filthy azure (2003) believes that the problem solving method is one of the ways which facilitate the development of logical and critical thinking in students. In his opinion, problem-solving is not considered as an obstacle or failure, but it is a process that is emerging if one is dealing with the incentives and a variety of topics and doesn't have a fast and satisfactory solution for them.

B) Decision-making Ability

Decision-making is a tool to form a positive future and it is a complex process involving a variety of intellectual abilities and having the information about the decision that we want to make. When we are faced with a problem power of thought is our highest force. To have a good and rational decision-making we must consider the following three stages:

Examine all aspects of a decision that are faced with it.

Determine the choices that are ahead.

Determine the consequences of each choice and the pros and cons of each of them, based on the solution with the most positive and less negative points and make the final choice (Aghavali Jamaat, 2008).

C) Effective Communication Ability

This skill includes coping well with others, learning more about others, and the ability to convey his feelings to others, the ability to communicate well with others and the desire to establish friendly relations with others. Human is defined by behavior, communication and interaction and successful effective social behavior seems impossible without close and friendly relationships. Ability to establish and maintain human relationships has great effects on individuals' social behavior and mental health (Khanifar and Poorhosseini, 2008).

Ability to shape emotions is the heart of communication art. Coordination with others requires a little comfort in the individual. Coping with others' feelings which is a remarkable art in communications requires two other emotional skills, i.e. mastering emotions and empathy (Golman, 2001).

Academic Achievement

The term academic achievement refers to the manifestation of position of student academic achievement. To define academic achievement, it is expressed that: this term refers to level of school learning of individual that is measured by different tests of calculus, geometry, science, etc. So according to these definitions, we can say that academic achievement is a term which refers to the amount of learning and obtained information in the process of teaching which are measured by academic achievement tests and ultimately based on the achieved progress, we can judge and decide. Many studies have been done regarding the relationship between life skills and different variables such as academic achievement. (Savoji, Ganji and Ahmad Zade, 2009) in their study showed that teaching Life skills has a significant effect on motivating progress and students' academic achievement and the effect of these trainings on girls and boys is the same. Considering the importance of life skills, learning these skills should become one of components of the curriculum in schools and in whole education courses.

Kheir and Seif's (2004) findings indicate that unsuccessful use of coping mechanisms, lead to fatigue and emotional exhaustion and one of its consequences is academic failure. The results of these researches indicate that assessing position skill has a positive effect on students' academic achievement. Moreover academic achievement of students who live in university dormitory is less than other students. In a comparison between boys and girls and between single and married persons, it was showed that girls and single persons had more academic achievement.

The results of the study done by Yasami Nezhad, Seif and Gol Mohammadian (2011) indicated that teaching life skills reduce delay of female students in the experimental group compared with the control group but it did not had a significant effect on their academic achievement. Results showed the importance of teaching life skills on reduction of procrastination in learners. Ahmadi Zade (1995) in his study concluded that teaching life skills has strong relationships with increasing social competencies and enhancing interpersonal relationships in teenagers and was effective in increasing sense of self study of teenagers.

Tatle's study (2006) indicated that teaching life skills for teenagers leads to the promotion of their decision making ability, communication and increase of their self-confidence. Also, Eshteman et.al (2005) in their study suggest that Teaching life skills in four areas of identification of progress or goal in the life, problem-solving and decision-making, interpersonal relationships and maintaining physical health has a considerable impact on the living environment and personal performance.

Lwees et.al (2005) investigating the promotion of mental health expresses that Positive mental health relates to quality of life skills factors such as cognitive skills, self-confidence, problem solving skill, stress management in the life.

Ahren and Jetz (2002) taught two components of the life skills of problem-solving and attempt in line with the high school students' goal. Their study indicated that progress achieved in increasing knowledge of learning skills.

METHODOLOGY

The study is an applied study in terms of purpose and it is also a descriptive-correlational study in terms of data collection. The study sample consisted of all female high school students of public schools located in District 2 of Zanjan city in academic year 2013-14 and according to education organization, the number of these schools were 10 and equal to 3418 people. Cochran formula is used to determine the sample size of mentioned population and the number of 345 people is obtained. Stratified random sampling method was used for distribution of the sample members. To this end, among the ten schools related to population, three schools were selected randomly and students of the mentioned schools were studied. Intended tool for gathering information is a questionnaire which is designed for the three problem solving, decision making and communication skills and is made of five degrees 22 items and their reliability obtained by Cronbach's alpha 82/0, 89/0 and 78/0 respectively. In addition to mentioned items a question regarding the evaluation of students' average scores was listed so that on this basis academic achievement of students obtain.

Findings

1) How much is the rate of problem-solving, decision-making, effective communication skills and academic achievement?

Table 1: Results of one-sample t test to determine difference between average of triple skills and academic achievement with hypothetical average

component	number	Standard deviation	average	Hypothetical average	Differences of averages	t	df	Significance level
Problem-solving skill	345	1.24	3.63	3	0.63	31.165	344	0.003
Decision-making skill	345	0.45	3.47	3	0.47	28.73	344	0.000
Effective communication skill	345	0.72	3.36	3	0.36	27.83	344	0.000
Academic Achievement	345	0.83	3.58	3	0.58	38.29	344	0.000

Based on the data of above table performed one-sample t test regarding skills of (problem-solving, decision-making and effective communication) and academic achievement indicate that obtained average difference is significant with hypothetical difference. This means that level of academic achievement and triple skills are higher than the hypothetical average.

2) Is there any relationship between problem-solving, decision-making and effective communication skills with students' academic achievement?

Table 2: Pearson correlation coefficient among triple skills and academic achievement

variables	average	number	Correlation coefficient	Significance level
Problem-solving skill	3.63	345	0.521	0.000
Academic Achievement	3.58			
Decision-making skill	3.47	345	0.547	0.000
Academic Achievement	3.58			
Effective communication skill	3.36	345	0.498	0.000
Academic Achievement	3.58			

Based on the above table it can be said that a positive correlation exists between the mentioned variables, this means that by increase of average scores of learned skills there will be an increase in academic achievement.

3) Which one of the three skills can predict students' academic achievement?

Table 3: Multiple regression Output to predict academic achievement through life skills component

Criterion variables	Predictive variables	Not standardized coefficients (B)	Standardized coefficients (Beta)	T	Significance level
Academic Achievement	Fixed value	216.1	-----	961.7	000.0
	Problem-solving	062.0	989.0	581.0	000.0
	Decision-making	012.0	043.0	128.1	002.0
	Effective communication	174.0	235.0	556.2	000.0

According to obtained standard coefficients from multiple regression analysis, among components of life skills (as predictive variables) all variables have significant predictive power so that its predictability is lower than significant level 05.0. Thus, changing one standard deviation of problem-solving variable causes about 989.0 changes in standard deviation of the academic achievement variable. Also changing one standard deviation of decision-making variable causes change about 043.0 standard deviation of academic achievement variable and changing one standard deviation of effective communication variable causes change about 235.0 standard deviation of academic achievement variable.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Generally, the results of the study indicate that the problem-solving, decision-making and effective communication skills as well as the academic achievement of female students in Zanjan are desirable. Also, in this study it is found that there is a significant relationship among problem-solving, decision-making and effective communication skills with academic achievement. This means that when students are at higher level of life skills their academic achievement will be promoted.

The results of this study on the relationship between life skills and academic achievement are in line with the results of Savoji, Ganji and Ahmad Zade' (2010) study so they have also acknowledged the relationship between life skills and academic achievement and in their opinion effect of these trainings on the male and female students is the same.

On the other hand the results of the present study are not consistent with the results of Yasami Nezhad, Seif and Gol Mohammadian study entitled effects of training life skills on reduction of procrastination and increase of academic achievement of female students of Islam Abad Gharb. The results of their study indicated that training, life skills cause reduction of procrastination female students in the experimental group compared with control group, but these trainings don't have a significant effect on academic achievement of students. Results show the importance of life skills training on reduction of procrastination in female students and did not influence their academic achievement.

Generally the results of this study regarding the relationship between life skills and academic achievement indicate that life skills are influencing factors on different aspects of students' life. These results are observable in studies done by Kheir and Seif (2004), Ahmadi Zade (1995), Tatle (2006) and Eshteman et.al (2005), it seems whatever the education system can improve the life skills of students, it can see its effect on different aspects of students' life specially academic achievement. So it is better to do other studies in different places in relation to other life skills and academic achievement to more understand the extent of this relationship.

REFERENCES

- Agha vali, Jamaat, Maryam. (2008). Life Skills in Twenty- First Century. *Educational Psychological Monthly Journal*.
- Ahmadi Zade, Mohammad Javad (1995). Investigating Effectiveness Training Problem-Solving Skill on Some Personality Characteristics of Teenagers in Circadian Care Under the Social Welfare, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Allame Tabatabayee University.
- Behraves, Mahmood. (2003). Teaching Method of Elementary Mathematics. Tehran: Publishing Textbooks Company.

- Tadayoni, Robab. (2001). Investigating the Relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement of students of teacher training University.
- Khoshabi, Katayoon. (2011). Investigating Rate of Knowledge of Female Students of Tehran Universities of Life Skills, scientific Journal of Hamadan University of Medical Sciences and Health Services.
- Khayer, Mohammad & Seif, Diba. (2004). Investigating the Relationship Between Coping Skills and Academic achievement Based on Some Demographic Factors.
- Khanifar, Hossein & Poorhosseini, Mozhd. (2008). Life Skills. Tehran: Hajar.
- Savoji, Azar & Ganji, Kamran & Ahmadzade, Mahmood.(2010). Effect of Life Skills Training on Motivating Progress and Students' Academic achievement. Scientific Journal of Social Welfare12 (47).
- Shalviri, Golrokh. (1998). Investigating the relationship of characteristics and place of control of mother and child, and student's academic achievement.
- Fathi Azar, Eskandar. (2003). Methods of Teaching, Tabriz: Tabriz University Publishing.
- Farahani, Mohammad Naghi. (2000). Personality psychology, theory, research, application. Teacher Training University, university jihad.
- Golman, Daniel. (2001). Emotional Intelligence. Translated by: Nasrin Parsa. Tehran: Roshd Publication.
- Hemmati Alamdarloo, Ghorban & Shojayee,Setare. (2010). Effect of Life Skill Training on Reduction of Conduct Disorder in Guidance school students of Imam Sajjad school, news and research of consultation. Lopis, E. Barry, M, Hosman, C. (2005). Mental health promotion Works. Promotion Education.81.9 -21
- Ohearn, tc.Gatz .M (2002). Going for the goal: Improving Youths problem – solving skills through a school. based Intervention. Journal of Community psychology.30-281-303
- Shechtman, z.levy, m.leich ten tritt, j (2005). Impact of life skills traiting on teachers perceived environment and self efficiency. Journal of educational research.98, 144 -154.
- Tuttle J, Campbell-Heider N, David TM. (2006). Positive adolescent life skills training for high-risk teens: results of a group intervention study. J Pediatr Health care2006;20(3):181 -91
- UNICEF. (2003). Which skill is” life skill. www.life Skill Based Education.