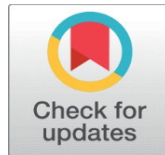


LIFE SKILLS AWARENESS: A STUDY OF HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, the primary focus has traditionally been on imparting knowledge and information. Student success was often measured by their ability to excel in examinations, achieve academic accolades, and pursue careers requiring specialized knowledge in a specific field. However, this paradigm is shifting. Education is no longer confined to textbooks and conventional classrooms. It is imperative for students to not only excel academically but also master the art of living.

Life skills, often called soft skills or essential skills, are gaining prominence as an integral component of education. These abilities, behaviors, and knowledge extend beyond academic disciplines and equipment for navigating the real-world problems. While academic knowledge remains undeniably important, life skills provide the foundation for leading successful, fulfilling lives. The realization that students need more than just scholastic achievement has led to a reinterpretation of educational goals.

This research tries to examine the significance of life skills in education, their multifaceted nature, and their capacity to prepare students for success in a society that values practical knowledge, interpersonal skills, and adaptability as much as academic knowledge. By examining communication skills, problem-solving techniques, financial literacy, time management, emotional intelligence, and digital literacy, we will explore how these components of life skills are the cornerstone of overarching education.

The study focused on Class XII students from two higher secondary schools in Aizawl District. A sample of 150 students (68 male, 82 female) were randomly selected from the population. A self-developed questionnaire was administered to the students during classroom visits. Responses were kept confidential. Statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation, and t-tests were employed for data analysis and assess life skills awareness of each respondent.

The analysis revealed that significant differences were found among male and female students in effective communication skills, accompanied by higher scores of male students. However, no significant differences were found between male and female students in critical thinking skills. Additionally, no noteworthy variations were observed among students from nuclear and joint families in any of the assessed life skills.

While this study offers insightful information about life skills awareness among higher secondary students, more investigation or research is needed to explore the factors influencing the development of these skills in order to cultivate effective strategies for incorporating them into educational curricula. By emphasizing the importance of life skills, educational institutions can empower students to navigate the challenges of the 21st century and lead successful, fulfilling lives.

Keywords: Life Skills, Higher Secondary Students and Awareness

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's ever-changing educational scene, the fundamental purpose has long been to teach knowledge and information. A student's success was frequently assessed by their ability to ace examinations, gain academic plaudits, and pursue occupations that required specialized knowledge in a specific sector. However, this paradigm is changing.

The scope of education has extended beyond textbooks and regular classrooms. It is no longer enough for pupils to excel in academics; they must also master the art of living.

Life skills, at times referred to as soft skills or fundamental skills, are becoming more and more important as a part of education. These abilities, behaviours, and knowledge cover a wide range and go beyond academic disciplines. They enable students to take on the difficult problems of the real world, where success is determined by a person's ability to successfully traverse life's intricacies as well as the depth of their specific knowledge.

While academic knowledge is still unquestionably important, life skills give kids the cornerstone they need to lead successful, meaningful lives. The understanding that pupils require more than merely scholastic success has led to a reinterpretation of educational goals. This study attempts to explore the significance of life skills in education, their multifaceted nature, and their capacity to equip students for success in a society that values practical knowledge, interpersonal skills, and adaptability just as much as academic knowledge. Since these life skills are the foundation of the versatility of education, we will examine communication skills, problem-solving techniques, financial literacy, time management, emotional intelligence, and digital literacy.

Life skills are extremely important in this day and age of rapidly advancing technology, changing job markets, and globalization. Pupils who possess these abilities not only have the potential to succeed academically but also to handle life's obstacles with grace, resiliency, and wisdom. Because of this, it is crucial that legislators and educational institutions acknowledge the value of life skills and include them in the curriculum to guarantee that today's students are adequately equipped to handle the complexity of the future.

2. LIFE SKILLS

Life skills are the competency, strength, and ableness of an individual for a behavior which is adjustable to fulfill the needs and demands of life so that they face the challenges effectively in life. Life skills inculcate healthy, positive, and productive progress of an individual, establish moral and ethical maturity, and enhance psycho-social skills. Life skills have become the salt and pepper for all individuals related to all aspects of life. It is a set of essential skills and capabilities that individuals need for effective management and navigation of the challenges and responsibilities of daily life.

The collection of abilities that help us deal with problems that come up frequently in our daily lives is referred to as a life skill. Students learn these abilities through their schooling and firsthand encounters in daily life. Students who develop life skills are better able to think and solve problems in fresh ways in daily life. A life skill is good behaviour, that includes a variety of information. Behaviours, attitudes, and values. It also denotes the possession of specific abilities and the ability to act in a constructive manner in order to accomplish a goal. The Vedic education system, whose primary goal was to improve men's physical, moral, and intellectual capacities is where the emphasis on life skills development originates. It was grounded on life's realities rather than just theory.

Skills are taught abilities that allow us to complete a task effectively with less energy, time, and resources. They are the talents to apply knowledge to accomplish a goal. There are various forms of skills, including learning, livelihood, athletic, cultural, recreational, and life skills. It is also very significant for improving our life skills and is one of the most crucial abilities to achieve our goals.

Quane (2002), said that constructive processing of information, impressions, interactions and experiences, both personal and professional that are a part of one's life and career, together with the swift changes that transpire throughout it, lead to the development of life skills. In this case, education and training in life skills open the door to capacity identification through self-analysis, requirement assessment, and training in the relevant field for an improved and successful outcome. The person will be able to translate information, attitudes, and values into healthy, behavior with the use of life skills. In other words, life skills are abilities that may be learned and developed through experience, allowing one to effectively apply information. Attitudes, and beliefs to constructive behavior, and dealing with day-to-day requirements and obstacles.

Abilities such as reasoning, emotions, and, behavior are generally shaped by frameworks such as self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, the ability of problem-solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, stress management, and emotion regulation. It appears that conventional affiliations such as family, school, and other social underpinnings, are not effective in helping kids and teenagers develop these kinds of talents. Numerous factors, such as media, moral and social contexts, social adjustments, children's and their parents' aspirations and values, have all made significant contributions to the development of these talents. As a result, it is critical

to provide kids and teenagers with opportunities to learn life skills in addition to reading, writing, and counting. The importance of mental health is being emphasized more and more these days with a large body of research having been done in this area worldwide. People start to understand its significance and role in social life as a result.

3. DEFINING LIFE SKILL

Life skills relate to a set of abilities and knowledge that help individuals to transverse numerous facets of daily life successfully. These abilities cover a broad spectrum and include communication, problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills. Gaining life skills is crucial for improving oneself, staying well, and succeeding in both the personal and professional spheres. Nonetheless, a review of the life skills area indicates that the foundation of skills-based programs aimed at enhancing children's and adolescents' health, and well-being is a basic set of abilities. Making choices, addressing issues, critical thinking, creativity and effective communication, social skills, consciousness of oneself, coping with emotions, and coping with stress.

4. IMPARTING LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION

School-based instruction can directly teach life skills. During their schooling years, children acquire a major percentage of their formal education, hence the schooling stage is quite important and also the developmental phase of a learner's life. As a result, life skills programs are mostly introduced in schools, and students acquire social skills and deal with authoritative figures other than their parents. Students' social development is aided by the support and direction they receive from the school community. The following activities and methods can be used at different levels and classes for instruction and enhancement of life skills in students:

5. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- 1) To find out the different components of life skills of secondary youths with reference to their gender, locality, family, and management.
- 2) Comparison awareness level of Life Skills Awareness among students of Higher Secondary Schools in Aizawl.

Hypotheses

- 1) There is not any notable difference between components of life skills in higher secondary school students with reference to gender, locality family, and management.
- 2) There are no significant variations between thinking Skills, Social Skills, and coping skills of higher secondary school students with reference to gender, locality, family, and management.

6. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Previous studies have highlighted the body of research on life skills education which offers copious amounts of information that attests to the significance of these abilities for students' growth and achievement. Several studies have explored the role of various factors in promoting life skills acquisition, including sports participation, curricular interventions, and life skills training programs.

Holt et al. (2008) undertook a case study to see whether teenage participation in high school athletics teaches them life skills. It was found that participation in athletics can provide opportunities for students to learn life qualities such as initiative, respect, and collaboration. However, the study also emphasized the value of coaching techniques and a supportive atmosphere in promoting the development of these abilities.

Alwell and Cobb (2009) conducted a systematic review of studies examining the efficacy of curriculum interventions for youth with disabilities that focus on functional life skills. The review found that these interventions can be beneficial in encouraging successful transition-related outcomes, like increased employment and capacity for independent living.

Several studies have looked at how well life skills training programs support academic success, mental health, and self-esteem. For example, Gharamaleki and Rajabi (2010) found that life skills training can be effective in reducing mental health symptoms, such as anxiety, depression, and stress. Haji and Hahtami (2011) indicated that receiving life skills training can improve one's quality of life, happiness, and ability to control emotions.

Overall well-being and success in various aspects of life (OECD, 2018; World Health Organization, 1994). For instance, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) discovered in a study that pupils with strong life skills are more likely to have positive educational outcomes, better mental health, and higher employment rates (OECD, 2018).

Population: The study focused on Class XII students from two higher secondary schools in Aizawl District.

Sampling: For sampling purpose, simple random sampling method was employed to select 150 students (68 male, 82 female) from the population.

Data Collection: A self-developed questionnaire was administered to the students during classroom visits. Responses were kept confidential.

Statistical Analysis: Statistical techniques such as Mean, standard deviation, and t-tests were employed to evaluate the respondent's awareness of life skills and analyze the data

7. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Objective1: To compare the different components of life skills of secondary adolescents concerning gender

S. No	N	Mean	Mean Difference	SD	t Value	Remarks
Self- Awareness	57	10.45	0.06	1.296	0.263	NS
	93	10.39		1.328		
Critical Thinking	57	10.35	0.51	1.217	2.050	S
	93	9.84		1.580		
Creative Thinking	57	10.38	0.11	1.497	0.404	NS
	93	10.27		1.604		
Decision Making	57	10.75	0.42	1.714	1.421	NS
	93	10.33		1.789		
Problem Solving	57	10.59	0.42	1.613	1.442	NS
	93	10.17		1.827		
Empathy	57	10.78	0.44	1.810	1.511	NS
	93	10.34		1.716		
Effective Communication	57	10.31	0.64	1.297	2.727	S
	93	9.67		1.445		
Interpersonal relationship	57	10.98	0.26	1.093	1.117	NS
	93	10.72		1.548		
Coping with stress	57	10.64	0.06	1.726	0.232	NS
	93	10.58		1.777		

significant* at 0.05 level

Interpretation: Suggests that there are 150 students from secondary school, the number of male students from secondary school is 57, and the number of female secondary school students is 93. The mean for male secondary school students is 10.35 and the mean for female students is 9.84. The standard deviation value of male students is 1.217 and the standard deviation value among females is 1.580. The 't' value is 2.050, which is significant in both areas. The mean for male secondary school students is 10.31 and the mean for female students is 9.67. The standard deviation value of male students is 1.297 and the standard deviation value among females is 1.445. The 't' value is 2.727, which is significant in both areas. Therefore, it can be concluded there is a significant difference in the mean scores of Secondary School students. Hence, "There would be a significant difference between male and female students of Higher Secondary School in their life skills of Effective Communication and critical thinking". Is Rejected

Key Findings:

- **Effective Communication:** There was a noticeable distinction between the students who were male and female in effective communication skills, with male students scoring higher.
- **Critical Thinking:** The critical thinking abilities of male and female pupils did not significantly differ from one another.
- **No Significant Differences:** The t-test results indicate that there were not any notable distinctions between students from male and female families in expect Effective communication and critical thinking in any of the assessed life skills

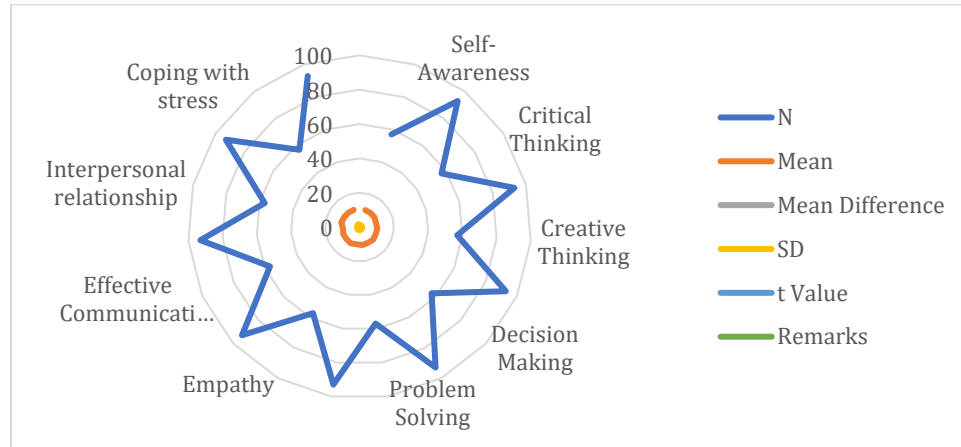


Figure-1 To compare the different components of life skills of secondary adolescents concerning gender

Table 2: Comparison of Life Skills awareness among Higher Secondary School students concerning their family type

Components	N	Mean	Mean Difference	SD	t Value	Remarks
Self- Awareness	99	10.45	0.1	1.349	0.448	NS
	51	10.35		1.246		
Critical Thinking	99	10.04	0.01	1.463	0.005	NS
	51	10.03		1.496		
Creative Thinking	99	10.36	0.13	1.508	0.476	NS
	51	10.23		1.668		
Decision Making	99	10.48	0.02	1.837	.082	NS
	51	10.50		1.641		
Problem Solving	99	10.26	0.21	1.687	.686	NS
	51	10.47		1.890		
Empathy	99	10.57	0.18	1.678	.604	SN
	51	10.39		1.919		
Effective Communication	99	9.91	0.01	1.419	.010	NS
	51	9.92		1.440		
Interpersonal relationship	99	10.86	0.14	1.290	.594	NS
	51	10.72		1.588		
Coping with stress	99	10.59	0.03	1.812	.104	NS
	51	10.62		1.648		
Coping with Emotions	99	9.87	0.3	1.579	1.033	NS

	51	10.17		1.840		
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Interpretation: The table given above indicates that there are 150 secondary school students, the number of nuclear students in secondary school is 99, and the quantity of joint students in secondary school is 51. The mean for the nuclear family is 10.45 and the mean for the joint family is 10.35. The SD value in a nuclear family is 1.349 and the SD value among a joint family is 1.246. The t-value is 0.448, which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas self-awareness is accepted. The t-value is 0.005, Critical Thinking". Is accepted. The t-value is 0.476, which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas. The t-value is .082, which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas critical thinking is accepted. The t-value is .686, which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas. Problem-Solving". Is accepted. The t-value is .604, which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas' decision making was accepted. Empathy". Is accepted. The t-value is .010, which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas. Effective Communication. Is accepted. The t-value is .594, which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas. Interpersonal- Relationship". Is accepted. The t-value is .104, which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas Coping with Stress". Is accepted. The t-value is 1.033, which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas Coping with Emotion" Is accepted.

Data Analysis:

The provided data analyzed the life skills of 150 secondary school students (99 nuclear families, 51 joint families) in various areas, including self-awareness, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, empathy, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, and coping with stress and emotions. Independent t-tests were conducted to compare the mean scores of students from nuclear and joint families.

Key Findings:

No Significant Differences: The t-test results indicate that there were no significant dissimilarities between students from nuclear and joint families in any of the assessed life skills.

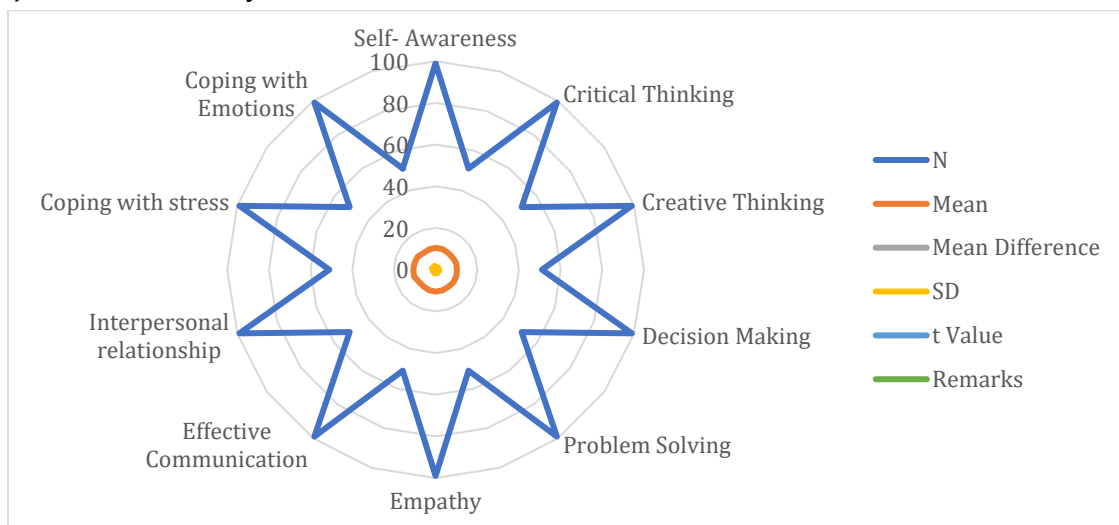


Figure-2: Table 2: Comparison of Life Skills awareness among Higher Secondary School students concerning their family type

Table 3: Comparison of Life Skills awareness among Higher Secondary School students concerning their locality

Components	N	Mean	Mean Difference	SD	t Value	Remarks
Self- Awareness	59	10.28	0.22	1.175	.991	NS
	91	10.50		1.393		
Critical Thinking	59	9.84	0.32	1.471	1.295	NS
	91	10.16		1.462		
Creative Thinking	59	10.00	0.52	1.377	2.044	S*
	91	10.52		1.642		

Decision Making	59	10.64	0.25	1.719	.840	NS
	91	10.39		1.800		
Problem-Solving	59	10.01	0.52	1.676	1.790	NS
	91	10.53		1.784		
Empathy	59	10.06	0.74	1.638	2.542	S*
	91	10.80		1.784		
Effective Communication	59	9.71	0.34	1.390	1.499	NS
	91	10.05		1.432		
Interpersonal relationship	59	10.59	0.1	1.427	1.611	NS
	91	10.69		1.361		
Coping with stress	59	10.47	0.22	1.745	.742	NS
	91	10.69		1.761		
Coping with Emotions	59	9.711	0.79	1.339	1.589	NS
	91	10.15		1.843		

significant* at 0.05 level

Interpretation: The mean value for rural is 10.00 and the mean for urban is 10.52. The standard deviation value in rural is 1.377 and the value among urban is 1.642. The t-value is 2.044, which is significant in both areas the mean for rural is 10.00 and the mean for urban is 10.52. The SD value in rural students is 1.638 and, the value among urban 1.782. The t-value is 2.542, which is significant in both areas. Therefore, it can be concluded there is a significant difference in the mean scores of Secondary School students. Hence, "There would be a significant difference between rural and urban Higher Secondary School students in their life skills of Creative Thinking and Empathy". Is rejected

The mean for rural is 10.28 and the mean for urban is 10.50. The SD value in rural is 1.175 and the SD value in urban is 1.393. The t-value is .991, which is not significant at 0.05 level, and the t-value is 1.295, which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas, The t-value is 2.044, which is significant at the 0.05 level in both areas, the t- value is .840, which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas, The t- value is 1.790, which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas, the t-value is 2.542, which is significant at the 0.05 level, the t- value is 1.499, which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas, the t-value is 1.611, which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas, The t-value is .724, which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas of Self-Awareness. critical - thinking and creative thinking are accepted, decision-making is accepted, Problem-Solving is accepted Communication is accepted, Interpersonal- Relationship is accepted, Coping with Stress is accepted.

The mean value for rural is 9.711 and the mean for urban is 10.15. The standard deviation value in rural is 1.338 and the SD value in urban is 1.843. The t-value is 1.589 which is not significant at 0.05 level in both areas. Therefore, it can be concluded there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Secondary School students. Hence, "There would be no significant difference between rural and urban Higher Secondary School students in their life skills of Coping with Emotion" is accepted.

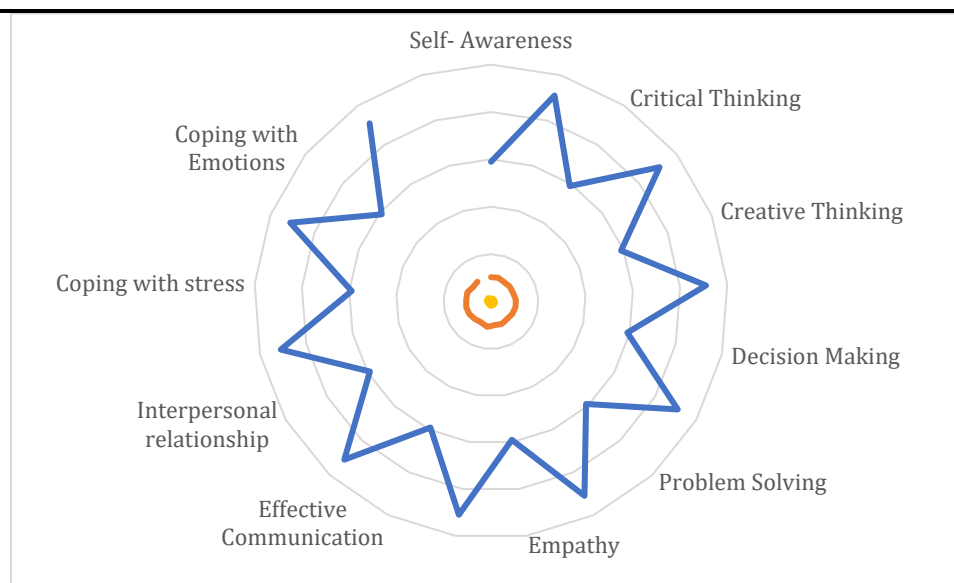


Figure 3: Comparison of Life Skills awareness among Higher Secondary School students concerning their locality

8. DISCUSSION AND CORRELATING WITH OTHER STUDIES

The study's conclusion aligns with existing studies on the teaching of life skills. Previous research has highlighted the importance of life skills for students' overall well-being and success in various aspects of life (OECD, 2018; World Health Organization, 1994). For instance, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) discovered in a study that students who possess good life skills are more likely to have positive educational outcomes, better mental health, and higher employment rates (OECD, 2018).

The study's findings regarding gender differences in effective communication skills are consistent with existing literature. Research suggests that boys and girls may possess distinct communication philosophies, with girls often being more relationship-focused and indirect and boys typically being more aggressive and direct. (Tannen, 1990). However, these differences may vary across cultures and contexts.

The lack of significant differences in critical thinking skills between male and female students is in line with some research that suggests there are no inherent gender differences in cognitive abilities (Hyde, Fennema, & Lamon, 1990). Other research, however, has discovered that cultural expectations and gender stereotypes might affect students' participation in critical thinking exercises. (Dweck, 2006).

The study's failure to find significant differences between students from nuclear and joint families in life skills is somewhat surprising, given the potential influence of family structure on individual development. It is crucial to remember that the study was carried out in a particular cultural setting, therefore it is possible that the conclusions cannot be applied to other groups.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of research on life skills education. The findings highlight the importance of incorporating life skills into educational curricula and the need for further research to explore the factors influencing their development. By emphasizing the importance of life skills, educational institutions can empower students to navigate the challenges of the 21st century and lead successful, fulfilling lives.

Implications

The results found from this study align with existing research on life skills education. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of life skills for students' overall well-being and success in various aspects of life (OECD, 2018; World Health Organization, 1994). For instance, a study conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) found that students with strong life skills are more likely to have positive educational outcomes, better mental health, and higher employment rates (OECD, 2018).

Gender Differences

The study's findings regarding gender differences in effective communication skills are consistent with existing literature. Research suggests that boys and girls may have different communication styles, with boys often being more assertive and direct, while girls tend to be more indirect and relationship-focused (Tannen, 1990). However, these differences may vary across cultures and contexts.

Critical Thinking Skills

The lack of significant differences in critical thinking skills between male and female students is in line with some research that suggests there are no inherent gender differences in cognitive abilities (Hyde, Fennema, & Lamon, 1990). However, other studies have found that gender stereotypes and societal expectations can influence students' engagement in critical thinking activities (Dweck, 2006).

Family Structure

The study's failure to find significant differences between students from nuclear and joint families in life skills is somewhat surprising, given the potential influence of family structure on individual development. It is crucial to remember that the study was carried out in a particular setting, therefore it is possible that the conclusions cannot be applied to other groups.

Policy and Practice Repercussions for Education

The study's conclusions have several significant ramifications for educational policy and practice.

Integration of Life Skills: The study underscores the need to integrate life skills into educational curricula at all levels. By developing life skills, students can better equip themselves to navigate the challenges of the 21st century.

Addressing Gender Differences: Educational institutions should implement strategies to promote gender-inclusive communication and encourage both male and female students to develop their communication skills.

Promoting Critical Thinking: While there may not be inherent gender differences in critical thinking skills, educational institutions should be mindful of gender stereotypes and societal expectations that may influence students' engagement in critical thinking activities.

By emphasizing the importance of life skills and implementing appropriate educational strategies, educational institutions can empower students to become well-rounded individuals who are prepared to succeed in both their personal and professional lives.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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