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Aligning Life Skills Development with Educational Goals: NEP 2020, Project-Based Learning and Peer Assessment in PBL

Rahul Kumar Sahu*, Rinki**, Kaushal Kishore***

Abstract

The policy document, the National Education Policy (2020), has re-shaped India's educational landscape by emphasizing the development of life skills among students. This research paper aims to provide a comprehensive review of the literature on integrating project-based learning (PBL) and peer assessment to improve life skills. The study examines the theoretical and practical foundations of life skills education as outlined in NEP 2020, investigates the effects of PBL on acquiring life skills, and analyzes the role of peer assessment in this process. By synthesizing the current body of knowledge, the paper identifies research gaps. It proposes a research agenda to understand better how PBL with peer assessment can effectively foster essential life skills in learners. This paper explores three key aspects of the transformative educational landscape aimed at enhancing life skills: the reforms recommended in the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP, 2020), Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a method to develop life skills, and the role of Peer Assessment in PBL environments. The study seeks to connect life skills development with educational objectives, with a focus on NEP 2020, PBL, and Peer Assessment. It aims to highlight the emphasis on life skills, explore PBL's role in skill development, and assess the impact of Peer Assessment. This research is solely qualitative, utilizing secondary data from books, journals, websites, research articles, and government publications. The study underscores the alignment between NEP 2020's educational goals and the life skills cultivated through PBL, especially when integrated with Peer Assessment, which enhances communica-

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tion, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills among students. The research stresses the importance of integrating life skills development with educational goals by applying NEP 2020 principles, PBL, and Peer Assessment. The findings indicate that PBL, combined with Peer Assessment, effectively promotes diverse skills and offers valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers to advance students' holistic development within modern educational frameworks.

Keywords: Life Skills, peer assessment, project-based learning, National Education Policy 2020, Student-centred approach.

Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a key document in the Indian education landscape, focusing on integrating life skills development into the broader educational goals. It outlines a vision for restructuring the Indian education system, emphasising the importance of nurturing life skills alongside traditional academic knowledge.

This paper examines the link between life skills development, NEP 2020, Project-Based Learning (PBL), and Peer Assessment in PBL environments. Life skills such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving are essential for preparing students for the challenges of the modern world. NEP 2020 stresses comprehensive education and the cultivation of life skills to create capable individuals who can contribute meaningfully to society.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a pedagogical approach that aligns with NEP 2020, enhancing students' understanding of academic concepts and cultivating life skills through real-world problem-solving scenarios. It also incorporates Peer Assessment, fostering responsibility, accountability, and collaboration among students, thereby enhancing their overall learning experience.

This research paper examines the integration of project-based learning (PBL) and peer assessment in developing life skills. It reviews existing literature and discusses the theoretical and practical aspects of life skills education as outlined by the policy document NEP 2020. The study seeks to highlight the diverse impacts of PBL on students' acquisition of vital life skills and the role of peer assessment within this pedagogical partnership. The aim is to inform educators and policymakers and to lay the groundwork for future research in pedagogy and skill development.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) and peer assessment are innovative educational approaches that foster the development of life skills. PBL is student-centric, involving real-world problem-solving scenarios, while peer assessment is collaborative, with students participating in critiquing and providing feedback. This combination holds promise for cultivating life skills essential for success in the 21st century.

PBL can help students acquire essential life skills such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving (Thomas, 2000; Mergendoller et al., 2005). Because of the immersive nature of PBL, students are compelled to engage in active inquiry, gaining a deeper understanding of subject matter and honing their ability to communicate effectively within a team. Furthermore, PBL encourages students to tackle complex problems collaboratively, cultivating teamwork and collaboration skills important in a variety of personal and professional contexts.

Peer assessment in PBL scenarios provides an additional level of educational synergy. Topping (1998) and Falchikov (2005) emphasize the value of peer assessment in enhancing learning outcomes. Peer assessment not only reinforces accountability but also cultivates a sense of duty among students. Through evaluating their peers' work, students improve their understanding of the subject matter and develop important skills such as giving constructive feedback, self-reflection, and adaptation.

This integration aligns with the objectives outlined by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which underlines a holistic approach to education. NEP 2020 envisions an educational system that goes beyond traditional academic knowledge, fostering individuals who are prepared with the key life skills required for success in a dynamic global world.

Methodology

The study is based on secondary data, and it is qualitative in nature. The sources of secondary data include journals, books, websites, research articles, government documents, and so on.

NEP 2020 Emphasises Life Skills

The National Education Policy 2020 is a comprehensive document that outlines the vision and goals for India's education reform. It emphasizes the holistic development of students, including the cultivation of life skills. The policy recognizes that education should not only focus on academic achievement but also equip students with the skills necessary for success in various aspects of life. It highlights the importance of foundational liter-

acy and numeracy, as well as broader competencies such as collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and effective communication.

The NEP 2020 also acknowledges the need to shift from rote learning to a more holistic, multidisciplinary approach. Curriculum and pedagogy will be transformed to support critical thinking, more holistic learning, and inquiry-based learning in schools. This shift aligns with the idea that life skills are developed through an integrated educational experience that promotes active engagement and problem-solving.

The policy also stresses the importance of vocational education and practical skills, starting in pre-school and continuing through Grade 12, with internship opportunities from Grades 6-12. This acknowledgement shows that life skills, including practical abilities and the capacity to handle real-world situations, are essential for all students, no matter their educational paths.

Role of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in Life Skills Enhancement

Project-Based Learning (PBL) has received recognition as a successful pedagogical technique that goes beyond traditional teaching methods by emphasising active participation and real-world application of knowledge.

Thomas et al. (2019) studied the impact of PBL on the development of life skills in secondary school students. They found a significant relationship between PBL participation and the development of essential life skills, such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving.

Johnson et al. (2020) conducted a meta-analysis to synthesise the findings of many studies on the effectiveness of PBL in fostering life skills. According to the findings, students who participated in PBL exhibited higher levels of creativity, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills than those in traditional educational environments.

The fundamental properties of PBL contribute to its effectiveness in fostering life skills. According to Hmelo-Silver (2004), PBL allows students to work on authentic, complex problems that require collaboration and communication to identify viable solutions. This method improves not only content knowledge, but also interpersonal and problem-solving skills.

The studies consistently support the role of Project-Based Learning in developing life skills. The emphasis on real-world problem-solving, cooperation, and critical thinking in PBL greatly enhances the development of skills required for success in academic and professional environments.

Integration of Peer Assessment in PBL Settings

Peer Assessment has been identified as an effective technique for improving learning outcomes, fostering collaboration, and developing critical skills among students in Project-Based Learning (PBL) environments.

Falchikov and Goldfinch (2000) investigate the integration of Peer Assessment within PBL settings. The study discovered that introducing Peer Assessment into PBL projects not only improved the evaluation of individual contributions but also generated a sense of accountability and responsibility among students working together.

Panadero and Jonsson (2013) also investigate the impact of Peer Assessment on the development of essential skills such as self-regulation and reflective thinking. According to their findings, the process of being assessed by peers encourages students to reflect on their work, identify areas for improvement, and actively participate in learning.

According to Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (2007), cooperative learning practices, such as peer assessment, play an important role in establishing good interdependence among students. The collaborative aspect of PBL, combined with peer feedback and assessment, produces an environment in which students learn to work well together, improving their interpersonal and communication skills.

Boud and Falchikov (2006) investigate the impact of Peer Assessment on the development of self-regulation skills. According to the research, when students assess their peers, they not only improve their capacity to provide constructive criticism, but they also become more reflective learners, taking responsibility for their own learning process.

Furthermore, Panadero and Alonso-Tapia (2013) studied the effects of Peer Assessment on the enhancement of critical thinking skills. The study shows that peer feedback, an essential component of the Peer Assessment process, encourages students to think critically about their own work and their peers' work, leading to a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

The use of Peer Assessment in PBL adheres to the formative assessment principles described by Black and Wiliam (1998). Formative assessment approaches, such as peer feedback, not only measure students' comprehension but also provide continual opportunities for improvement, cultivating a growth mindset and developing important life skills.

Educational Outcomes

NEP 2020 and Holistic Development:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 underscore comprehensive development by including life skills into the curriculum (Government of India, Ministry of Education, 2020). The extent to which NEP 2020 principles contribute to students' overall development, including cognitive, social, emotional, and ethical aspects, can be used to assess educational outcomes.

Project-based Learning and Real-world Application:

Educational outcomes related to Project-Based Learning (PBL) can be assessed by learners' ability to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world issues. According to Thomas et al. (2019), PBL has a favourable impact on critical thinking and collaborative skills.

Peer Assessment in PBL and Collaborative Skills:

According to Falchikov and Goldfinch (2000) and Panadero and Jonsson (2013), Peer Assessment improves collaborative skills and self-regulation in PBL situations. Improvements in students' capacity to give and receive constructive feedback, as well as work effectively in teams, can be used to assess educational achievements.

Integrated Approach and Synergies:

The educational benefits of a holistic approach can be measured by studying the synergies between NEP 2020, PBL, and Peer Assessment. This includes assessing how the integrated implementation contributes to a complete educational experience by strengthening cognitive skills, creativity, and social skills.

Long-term Impact and Lifelong Learning:

Walker and Leary (2009) emphasise the need to evaluate the long-term impact of PBL on skills outside of the academic setting. Educational outcomes can be quantified by determining whether the integrated method fosters a lifelong learning and adaptive disposition.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

Barriers to Implementation: The successful integration of NEP 2020, PBL, and Peer Assessment involves resource allocation, teacher training, and

institutional preparedness issues (Kumar, 2021).

Assessment Rigour: Ensuring the validity and reliability of assessments in PBL is difficult, especially when Peer Assessment is used. It is critical to maintain assessment rigour while also providing a helpful learning environment. (Hmelo-Silver et al., 2007).

Opportunities

Enhanced Student Engagement: PBL and Peer Assessment provide chances to increase student engagement by creating a more collaborative and participatory learning environment (Savery & Duffy, 1996).

Real-world Relevance: The incorporation of real-world problem-solving correlates with the NEP 2020 emphasis on practical knowledge and application, providing students with a more contextualised learning experience. (Government of India, Ministry of Education, 2020).

Recommendations for Educational Practices

Professional Development: Invest in comprehensive professional development programmes for educators to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively implement PBL and Peer Assessment (Belland et al., 2015).

Formative Assessment Practices: Emphasize formative assessment approaches to monitor and promote student growth continuously. Regular feedback, both from peers and instructors, contributes to the iterative character of PBL and supports skill growth (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Technology Integration: Use instructional technology to enhance PBL and peer assessment. Digital platforms can help to simplify the evaluation process, provide collaboration tools, and improve student communication (Hmelo-Silver & Eberbach, 2011).

Conclusion

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a powerful tool for enhancing life skills, particularly in real-world problem-solving, collaboration, and critical thinking. This approach is crucial for success in both academic and professional contexts. The literature suggests that integrating Peer Assessment in PBL settings can enhance collaborative learning, accountability, and critical thinking among students. This approach can enhance communication, collaboration, self-regulation, and critical thinking. The proposed paper suggests that integrating the objectives of NEP 2020, PBL, and Peer As-

assessment in PBL settings can enhance student engagement and real-world relevance. While challenges exist, the opportunities for enhancing student engagement and relevance are substantial. By addressing these challenges through targeted professional development and embracing technology, educational practices can be tailored to align with the transformative goals set forth by NEP 2020. The integration of these elements can provide a foundation for discussing the potential educational benefits of PBL in a multidimensional manner.

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Empowering Cadets of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) Through Life Skills Education and Training: An Impact Assessment Study

Yamini B, Angelin M, Cyndrilla Mary N C*

Abstract

The National Cadet Corps (NCC) offers voluntary participation opportunities to students in schools and colleges. The NCC training is aimed at integrating life skills in daily life, fostering leadership, personality development and patriotism among cadets. This paper attempts to measure the levels of proficiency acquired by NCC Cadets through various training activities in the ten domain areas of life skills. The study is conducted among 100 Ex-NCC cadets trained in different colleges in the city of Chennai, Tamil Nadu. A snowball sampling method will be adopted to collect data. The findings of the study will provide insights on the life skills imparted by NCC, which is the largest uniform youth organization in India, aimed at creating a human resource of organized and motivated youth. The study will also identify the gaps, if any, that could be addressed to enhance training, skill development and provide opportunities for NCC cadets to better understand self and others, develop personality, leadership and contribute to nation building.

Keywords: Ex Cadets of National Cadet Corps, Impact Assessment, Ten Domain Areas of Life Skills

Introduction

The National Cadet Corps (NCC) is an esteemed organization that aims to nurture the youth of our nation by instilling in them character, comradeship, discipline, leadership, a secular outlook, a spirit of adventure, and ideals of selfless service. As one of the largest uniformed youth organizations in the world, the NCC operates under the Ministry of Defence, Government of India, and provides structured training programs in military discipline, adventure activities, and community service. Guided by its motto “Unity and Discipline,” the NCC seeks to foster responsible, confident, and social-

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ly committed citizens who embody national pride and unity in diversity.

In today's rapidly changing socio-cultural and educational landscape, there is an increasing emphasis on equipping young people with essential life skills that enhance their personal and social competence. Integrating life skills education within NCC training provides a unique opportunity to empower cadets to translate values into action, develop emotional resilience, and cultivate leadership qualities aligned with responsible citizenship. Life skills such as communication, critical thinking, decision-making, and empathy reinforce the NCC's objectives by preparing cadets to meet contemporary challenges with confidence, adaptability, and a sense of service.

Definition of Life skills and Interpretations by WHO:

According to the World Health Organization (1986), life skills encompass a combination of personal, interpersonal, cognitive, and physical abilities that enable individuals to take charge of their lives and effectively adapt to or influence their environment. These skills form the foundation for developing personal competencies essential to health promotion- one of the key action areas identified in the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (1986). The Charter emphasizes that health promotion facilitates personal and social development by providing health education and strengthening life skills. In doing so, it expands individuals' capacity to make informed choices, exercise greater control over their health and surroundings, and adopt behaviors conducive to overall well-being. Furthermore, life skills education equips people to acquire and apply health-related knowledge throughout their lives, preparing them to manage various stages of illness, and to cope effectively with chronic conditions and injuries. Promoting this concept requires coordinated action across schools, homes, workplaces, and communities through the collective efforts of educational, professional, commercial, and voluntary organizations, as well as institutional initiatives.

A more widely used definition of life skills by The World Health Organisation (1997) is that life skills are "the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life".

Life skills education refers to the systematic development of abilities that enable individuals to adapt and respond effectively to the demands and challenges of everyday life. Life skills encompasses a broad range of psychosocial and interpersonal competencies such as self-awareness, communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, empathy,

teamwork, and coping with stress and emotions. Life skills are essential for fostering adaptive behavior, emotional balance, and constructive social interaction.

For young adults, particularly college students, life skills play a crucial role in helping them manage academic pressures, interpersonal relationships, and the transition to adulthood. Abilities such as critical thinking, communication, time management, and adaptability are indispensable not only for academic success but also for the development of responsible citizenship. Alongside academic knowledge, the practice of the above mentioned psycho-social and cognitive skills equips students to manage complexity, make informed decisions, build healthy relationships, and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

In the modern world shaped by rapid technological advancement, globalization, and interconnected societies, life skills are no longer optional but essential competencies for survival and success. The ability to think critically, solve problems creatively, and adapt to new situations empowers young people to navigate uncertainty and change effectively. Strong communication and emotional intelligence further enhance their capacity to collaborate, resolve conflicts, and build inclusive communities. By learning to express ideas clearly, listen empathetically, and regulate emotions, individuals strengthen teamwork, resilience, and social awareness, the life skills indispensable for personal and professional growth. Incorporating life skills education into higher education programmes is therefore pivotal. It prepares youth with the confidence, self-discipline, and decision-making ability needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving world. Cultivating these competencies enables them to become adaptable, empathetic, and responsible contributors to society who can lead positive change.

This study employs a purposive sampling method focused on ex-National Cadet Corps (NCC) members from Chennai, individuals who have completed their tenure within the NCC programme. This targeted approach allows for a deeper understanding of how structured NCC training influences life skills development. The research utilized a Life Skills Assessment Scale to evaluate competencies such as communication, leadership, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving. Findings revealed that ex-NCC cadets demonstrated strong aptitude in these areas, reflecting the impact of NCC's experiential learning framework. Their enhanced communication, leadership, and adaptive capabilities underscore the effectiveness of NCC training in fostering well-rounded individuals prepared for diverse personal and professional challenges. Google Forms were used to assess the life

skills of ex-NCC cadets in Chennai. The research involved distributing 100 questions to assess 10 dimensions of life skills. The goal was to gauge the proficiency of these ex-NCC cadets across various vital skills. The targeted sample size of 100 ex-NCC cadets allowed for a thorough analysis of their life skill competencies. This approach provided valuable insights into the impact of their NCC training on their life skills development, allowing for a deeper understanding of their experiences and skillsets. The information underscores an exceptional degree of proficiency gained from their NCC training. These cadets showed a great propensity for cooperative work, efficient communication, and flexible problem-solving, highlighting the real influence of NCC's all-encompassing training method on developing well-rounded people.

Literature Review

Hooda and Sharma (2023), in their article “The New Elective of National Cadet Corps (NCC): A Review of Literature”, conducted a systematic review of research on the NCC in India to understand its role in youth development and character building. With the NCC recently transitioning from a co-curricular activity to a credit course, the study explored the potential benefits and implications of this change. The authors examined the amount of research available on the NCC, compared it with similar voluntary youth organizations in other countries, reviewed its objectives in schools and colleges, and considered the positive outcomes of participation. The review found that research on the NCC is limited, despite its important contribution to youth development. Only India and Bangladesh have organizations similar to the NCC, highlighting its unique role. Few studies focus specifically on the NCC's objectives in educational settings, indicating a research gap. However, available studies show positive effects of NCC participation, including promoting unity in diversity, improving employability, supporting mental health, and fostering patriotism. The authors note limitations in the existing research, such as potential biases and a lack of comprehensive studies, and call for further research. They recommend future studies to explore the NCC's objectives in education, investigate how positive outcomes are achieved, and use longitudinal, quantitative, and qualitative methods. This work contributes to understanding the NCC's impact on youth development and helps identify areas for improving educational practices and policy.

Huda, Kazi, and Rahaman (2022), in their study titled “Performance of Bangladesh National Cadet Corps in Youth Development: A Descriptive Review,” examined the contribution of the Bangladesh National Cadet

Corps (BNCC) to national youth development. The study assessed the effectiveness of the Youth Development Programmes (YDPs) implemented by BNCC, focusing on community service initiatives and skill development activities. Using secondary data and descriptive statistical techniques—such as adjusted mean scores and coefficients of variation—the researchers evaluated and compared programme performance. Their findings revealed that leadership and communication skill development programmes demonstrated strong and consistent outcomes, while the overall performance of BNCC's youth initiatives was highly positive. The study offers valuable insights for youth development organizations aiming to strengthen their strategies for empowering young people.

P. Charishma et al. (2022), in their paper highlights the fact that physical fitness and overall health of young students are crucial for the development and well-being of a nation. Sedentary lifestyles and poor health habits can contribute to conditions such as obesity, hypertension, early-onset diabetes, and other metabolic disorders. Indians, in particular, are at a higher risk of developing heart-related ailments at a younger age compared to Western populations. This study was conducted on 60 adolescent girls (aged 17–19) from Maharani Women's Arts, Commerce, and Management College, Bengaluru, to compare the physical fitness and anthropometric profiles of students undergoing National Cadet Corps (NCC) training (experimental group) with those not participating in NCC training (control group). Participants were selected through purposive sampling, and health-related fitness tests along with anthropometric measurements were conducted in two trials. The findings indicated that 47% of the experimental group were underweight (mean $\pm$ SD: 18.91 ± 2.37), compared to 40% in the control group (mean $\pm$ SD: 19.23 ± 2.19). The waist-to-hip ratios in both groups ranged from 0.75 to 0.79. The experimental group demonstrated higher overall physical fitness, with significant differences observed in sit-ups, push-ups, and the three-minute step test at the 1% level of significance. These results highlight the importance of incorporating regular exercise programs to enhance physical fitness among adolescents.

The National Cadet Corps (NCC) originated from the University Corps, established under the Defence Act of 1917 to address army shortages during British rule. The NCC was formally established on 16th July 1948 under the NCC Act XXXVI of 1948, functioning under the Ministry of Defence. Over the years, the NCC has built a strong reputation for serving society in times of need, including during cyclones, floods, droughts, epidemics, and strikes, as well as in maintaining law and order. NCC cadets have col-

laborated with civil defense authorities, contributing to rescue operations and traffic management. During the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965 and the Bangladesh-Pakistan War of 1971, they served as a second line of defense. The study by Krishnan (2021), highlights the cadets' contributions to society and nation-building, reflecting the dedication and character of Indian youth.

The book NCC: Value Added Course VAC 2 by L T Mukesh Rana ANO -6DBN (2023) serves as a reference guide for students enrolled in the Value-Added Course on the National Cadet Corps. It is organized into four sections—Personality Development, Leadership, Social and Community Service, and Practice Tests. The author acknowledges the guidance and support of NCC officials and college authorities, as well as the active contribution of cadets in shaping the book. The publication aims to enhance readers' understanding of the NCC and its role in fostering personal growth, leadership, and social responsibility.

Subasree, R. et al.(2014) in their study aimed to develop a valid and reliable scale to assess life skills. In the first phase, life skills were conceptualized and operationalized through a literature review that identified research gaps and guided the framing of questionnaire items. In the second phase, experts evaluated the tool's face and content validity, and data were collected from 890 participants to establish its reliability and validity. Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha, test-retest, and split-half methods. Items with weak indicators were removed step by step, although the scale already showed high reliability without elimination. The final version, consisting of 100 items, achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84, confirming strong psychometric properties.

The study by Sarkar and Margaj S M (2015) highlights the importance of integrating soft skills into higher education and recommends introducing NCC studies as a compulsory component across all academic streams. Higher education in India largely emphasizes subject-specific learning, often overlooking the development of essential soft skills. These skills are crucial for shaping students into responsible and well-rounded individuals. Parents and educators tend to focus mainly on the traditional "Three R's" - reading, writing, and arithmetic and prioritize academic knowledge over personal development. This narrow focus has made it challenging to nurture soft skills among graduates.

The National Cadet Corps (NCC) emphasizes citizenship education to nurture responsible individuals who contribute positively to the global com-

munity. It underscores the need for disciplined conduct, character building, and commitment to the constitutional ideals of the nation. Despite India's abundance of natural and human resources, effective sensitization and social orientation remain essential for realizing the full potential of its youth. Mohan Kumar (2015) conducted a comparative study among NCC and non-NCC students in higher education institutions across Chennai and Puducherry, examining factors such as training duration, educational background, and parental income to understand the broader impact of NCC participation. The study found that NCC students displayed greater national values and love for the country, unity, justice, equality, sociality and brotherhood than that of the college students.

The National Cadet Corps (NCC) plays a crucial role in fostering the holistic development of college students by promoting leadership, discipline, and a strong sense of national pride. As an established component of higher education, the NCC provides a structured platform for developing essential life competencies through its diverse training programmes and community initiatives. Participation in NCC activities cultivates leadership qualities, teamwork, and discipline, enabling students to manage time effectively and respond to challenges with confidence. Moreover, the emphasis on physical fitness contributes to both physical and mental well-being, reinforcing the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The organization also instils a deep sense of civic responsibility and national service through its social outreach activities, thereby shaping responsible, self-reliant, and socially committed young citizens.

Gurusamy (2023), summarizes the benefits of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) for college students. It states that the NCC is a cornerstone of college life, enriching the educational experience by emphasizing leadership, discipline, camaraderie, physical fitness, and social responsibility. As cadets graduate, they are prepared for challenges beyond college with valuable skills and value

The paper by Elavarasan, C. et al. (2021), examines the leadership qualities among college students of Trichy Group (Zone) in Tamil Nadu. The sample consisted of 630 college students from Trichy, Thanjavur, Perambalur, Sivagangai, Karur and Nagapattinam Districts of Tamil Nadu in India. The Researcher analyzed the students' response using t-test and Anova. The study found that the college students, who underwent the NCC training, displayed a high degree of leadership qualities compared to students without NCC training, in the Trichy Group of Tamil Nadu.

The reviewed literature highlights the significant role of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) and similar youth organizations in fostering holistic development through structured training, leadership opportunities, and community engagement. Studies from India and Bangladesh demonstrate that NCC participation enhances leadership, communication, discipline, physical fitness, patriotism, and civic responsibility among cadets. Research also indicates that, despite its impact, limited academic exploration has been conducted on the NCC's objectives and outcomes within educational institutions, especially in connection with life skills education. Parallel studies emphasize the growing need for integrating life skills into higher education to build responsible and adaptive citizens. The development of valid life skills assessment tools further underscores the importance of measuring these competencies systematically. Collectively, these findings establish a strong foundation and rationale for the present study, which seeks to assess how NCC training contributes to life skills acquisition and personal empowerment among cadets, thereby aligning national service with educational and developmental goals.

Research Methodology

This study employed a multi-dimensional life skills assessment aligned with the World Health Organization (WHO) framework. A structured scale comprising 100 statements measured ten essential life skills, using a 5-point response system ranging from “always true of me” to “not at all true of me.” Both positively and negatively framed items were included, and the questions were strategically sequenced to minimize halo effects, logical errors, and respondent fatigue. The tool allowed for both self-administration and group applications. Data were collected online via Google Forms from 100 ex-NCC cadets from colleges in Chennai, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of life skills among this demographic.

Research Design

The study adopted a combination of experimental and quantitative research designs. The Life Skills Assessment Scale served as the primary instrument for measuring life skills proficiency. Using a snowball sampling method, 100 ex-NCC cadets were recruited, where initial participants referred additional respondents, allowing the sample to expand organically. The experimental approach was implemented through controlled online data collection, while the quantitative framework enabled statistical analysis to identify trends and patterns in life skills development. This design provided an objective assessment of the impact of NCC training on cadets’

life skills, offering insights for both academic and practical applications.

Analysis of the Data

Dimensions of the life skills acquired through the Life Skill Assessment Scale – Raw scores and the Classification based on the scale given for measuring the raw scores.

Dimensions of the life skills acquired through the
Life Skill Assessment Scale

Table A

Sl.No.	Dimensions of Life Skills	Scores Achieved	Classification
1	Self-Awareness	45	HIGH
2	Empathy	40	AVERAGE
3	Effective Communication	34	AVERAGE
4	Interpersonal Relationships	38	AVERAGE
5	Creative Thinking	26	AVERAGE
6	Critical Thinking	41	AVERAGE
7	Decision Making	39	AVERAGE
8	Problem Solving	36	AVERAGE
9	Coping with Emotions	45	HIGH
10	Coping with stress	30	AVERAGE
	Sum of All Dimensions	374	HIGH
	Maximum Score	500	

The table displays the results of the evaluation of different life skills aspects for a particular group, highlighting the scores attained in each dimension. The results show the degrees of competency in 10 distinct life skill areas as determined by a thorough assessment. The total cumulative score for all dimensions comes to 374 out of a possible 500 points. This implies that even while there is proficiency in a number of life skill areas, there is still opportunity for improvement and development throughout the entire spectrum.

The highest scores are seen in Self-Awareness and Coping with Emotions, both achieving 45 points each. This signifies a notable level of self-awareness and emotional regulation within the assessed group, Critical Thinking (41), Decision Making (39), and Empathy (40) are also comparatively excellent. These ratings suggest an understanding in critical thinking, sound judgment, and sympathetic comprehension in social situations. Nonethe-

less, several aspects indicate room for enhancement. Lower ratings for Coping with Stress (30) and Creative Thinking (26) indicate possible areas where the evaluated group can benefit from further attention or instructions, although the group shows promise in self-awareness, emotional coping, critical thinking, decision-making, and empathy, there is room for improvement in problem-solving, creative thinking, stress management, effective communication, and improving interpersonal relationships. This evaluation offers insightful information on certain areas for focused interventions or educational programmes meant to improve living skills in the target group.

Age of the Respondents

Table 1

Age of Respondents	Percentage
18-22 years old	74.10%
23-27 years old	22.40%
28-32 years old	1.20%
33-37 years old	1.20%
38 & above years	1.20%

The contents in table 1 shows the ages of the respondents who took part in the assessment. The bulk of respondents, 74.10% of the entire sample, are between the ages of 18 and 22. This predominance suggests a high engagement of younger persons who have likely to have recently completed or are currently within the age range of active NCC cadet-ship. A smaller but significant number, 22.40%, is between the ages of 23 and 27. This group most likely consists of those who have just finished their NCC tenure or are in the process of moving out of the cadet programme. The remaining percentages, each at 1.20%, are made up of respondents aged 28 to 32, 33 to 37, and 38 years and older. These groups, however few in number, include elderly people who may have completed their NCC engagement earlier in life but are still eager to contribute to the evaluation of life skills based on their previous experiences. Overall, the age distribution of respondents skews toward the younger age brackets, which is consistent with the projected demography of ex-NCC cadets who participated. This distribution highlights the younger cohort’s active engagement and interest in assessing and making observations on the life skills they gained via NCC training, providing significant views on the impact of such programmes on varied age groups.

Sex of Respondents

Table 2

Sex	Percentage
FEMALE	56.50%
MALE	43.5

The distribution of respondents by gender indicates that there were relatively more female respondents than male respondents in the evaluation. The noteworthy participation of females indicates that women are actively involved and interested, which may indicate that they are taking a proactive stance when it comes to skill appraisal and self-evaluation. This distribution reveals how willing both genders were to take part in assessing their life skills, indicating a common goal in developing one’s own self-awareness and self-improvement in the light of NCC experiences.

Methodology Adopted By The NCC To Incorporate Life Skills Training

Table 3

Methodology adopted by the NCC to incorporate Life Skills Training	Percentage
DRILL SESSIONS	92.90%
THEORETICAL SESSIONS	67.10%
PT PARADE	70.60%
WEBINARS	47.10%
OTHERS	CAMPS, SENIORS TRAINING, RAGADA

The details provided in table -3, demonstrates the many ways used by the NCC to incorporate life skills into their training programmes. The most common method stated by respondents is drill sessions, with an astounding 92.90% indicating its usage in imparting life skills. Theoretical sessions are closely followed at 67.10% and PT parades at 70.60%, indicating their important roles in implementing life skills training within the NCC programme. Furthermore, nearly half of those polled (47.10%), recognized webinars as a medium utilized by the NCC for skills training. In addition to these basic approaches, respondents suggested camps, seniors training, and ragada as auxiliary methods. The NCC employs life skills integration within its training programmes. Overall, this data reveals that the NCC used a diversified method to impart life skills to cadets, including practical sessions like drills and PT parades, theoretical sessions, webinars, and different events like camps and seniors training.

Part of National Level Training Camp

Table 4

Part of National level training camp	Percentage
YES	41.20%
NO	58.80%

The National Cadet Corps (NCC) training camps at the national level that the respondents attended are displayed in table-4. The data reveals that 41.20% of those surveyed have attended training camps at the national level, whereas the majority, 58.80%, have not. This indicates that while it is not the majority of respondents, a sizable fraction of them have had the chance to take part in national training camps run by the NCC. While these activities are available, it's possible that not all cadets can access them or attend them, as indicated by the lower percentage of participants that participated in such high-level camps. But the high percentage of respondents who reported participating in these nationwide training programmes highlight the importance and influence of these experiences in the NCC training programme.

NCC Activities And Programmes Ex-Cadets Have Taken Part

Table 5

NCC activities and programmes Ex- cadets have taken part	Percentage
Social Service Activities	88.20%
Selection Camps	75.30%
Attachment Camps	38.80%
Training Camps	82.40%
National Level camps	42.40%
Others	Leadership camps, Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat CATC CAMP

The table illustrates the diverse range of activities and programmes in which ex-NCC cadets have actively participated. Social service activities stand out prominently, with an overwhelming 88.20% of respondents having engaged in these initiatives. Selection camps and training camps also garnered substantial participation, at 75.30% and 82.40%, respectively. These statistics underscore the comprehensive exposure and involvement of ex-cadets in various NCC activities, emphasizing their commitment to personal and community development. Attachment camps and national-level camps, while slightly less prevalent, still demonstrate significant

participation at 38.80% and 42.40%, respectively. The inclusion of “Others” activities such as leadership camps, Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat, and CATC CAMP further emphasizes the diverse and enriching experiences provided by the NCC programme. This broad spectrum of activities not only contributes to skill development but also fosters a holistic self-assessment and evaluation among cadets, facilitating the emergence of well-rounded individuals prepared for leadership roles in society.

Life Skills Enhanced In Ex-Ncc Cadets During NCCtraining

Table 6

Life Skills enhanced in Ex- NCC Cadets During NCC Training	Percentage
Self -Awareness	81.20%
Empathy	52.90%
Effective Communication	81.20%
Interpersonal Relationships	74.10%
Creative Thinking	65.90%
Critical Thinking	76.50%
Decision Making	88.20%
Problem Solving	54.70%
Coping with Emotions	69.40%
Coping with stress	70.60%

The chart shows how former National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets felt their training had improved their different life skills. The data shows that there has been significant reported progress in a number of skills. Self-awareness and effective communication both reached 81.20%, while decision-making came in second at 88.20%. These numbers point to a significant feeling of growth in these areas as a result of NCC training. Notable improvements are also seen in interpersonal relationships (74.10%) and Critical Thinking (76.50%). Other talents, such as Problem Solving (54.70%), Creative Thinking (65.90%), and Empathy (52.90%), show less reported progress. Moderate progress is shown in Coping with Emotions (69.40%) and Stress (70.60%). Overall, respondents felt that some abilities needed further improvement even as others showed significant growth that they attributed to their NCC training.

Life Skills Ex-NCC Cadets Failed To Gain During NCC Training

Table 7

Life skills Ex-NCC Cadets failed to gain during NCC training	Percentage
Self-Awareness	28%
Empathy	36%
Effective Communication	25.30%
Interpersonal Relationships	28%
Creative Thinking	34.70%
Critical Thinking	22.70%
Decision Making	22.70%
Problem Solving	22.70%
Coping with Emotions	38.70%
Coping with stress	30.70%

The table illustrates the life skills that respondents perceive as less gained during their National Cadet Corps (NCC) training. The data reveals relatively lower percentages across various skills, with Coping with Emotions (38.70%) being the highest among those perceived as less gained, followed by Empathy (36%) and Creative Thinking (34.70%). Effective Communication, Interpersonal Relationships, and Self Awareness, each at 25.30% and 28%, indicate moderate levels of perceived development. Critical Thinking, Decision Making, and Problem Solving all exhibit similar lower percentages at 22.70%. Coping with Stress is perceived as less gained by 30.70% of respondents. The table suggests that, according to the respondents, Coping with Emotions and Empathy are areas where they feel they might not have gained as much during their NCC training, emphasizing potential focal points for future training initiatives to further enhance these specific life skills among ex-cadets.

Are Life Skills Training Important For NCC Cadets?

Table 8

Life Skills Training Important for NCC cadets	Percentage
YES	92.90%
NO	1.20%
MAYBE	5.90%

The data indicates that there is a high consensus among respondents on the significance of life skills training. 92.90 percent of respondents agree

that life skills training is necessary, demonstrating the strong demand and recognition of its importance. 1.20 percent say it's not necessary, indicating a relatively small minority that disagrees with the idea that this kind of training is necessary. The 5.90 percent of respondents who answer "maybe" may indicate some hesitancy or doubt about the necessity of life skills training. Overall, the large majority of respondents who favour this training highlight how important and the small percentage who do not believe it is necessary highlight how widely ex-NCC cadets support the inclusion of life skills training.

Limitation

The study examining the empowerment of NCC Cadets through Life Skills Education and Training faces several noteworthy limitations. Initially, the research's geographical focus solely on ex-NCC cadets in Chennai presents a constraint in representing the broader diversity and experiences within the NCC cadre nationwide. This geographical specificity potentially limits the generalizability of the study's findings, as NCC experiences and the impact of training could vary across different regions, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Another significant limitation lies in the study's relatively less respondent count, to 100 participants. While this sample size might provide valuable insights into the experiences of these ex-cadets, it may not fully encapsulate the breadth and depth of perspectives and outcomes derived from NCC training. A larger and more diverse participant pool could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the varied impacts of life skills education within the NCC framework.

Furthermore, the absence of a comparative analysis with Non-NCC Cadets holds the study's ability to distinctly delineate the gains specifically attributed to NCC training. A comparative examination would offer a clearer contrast between the skill developments and achievements of NCC cadets compared to peers who didn't undergo such training, enabling a more precise assessment of the programme's effectiveness.

Lastly, while the study highlights the potential benefits of using triangulation methods in future research, this approach was not incorporated in the current study. Triangulation, involving the use of multiple research methods or data sources to corroborate findings, could provide a more robust validation of the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviours acquired through NCC training. This methodological enhancement could augment the study's credibility and depth of analysis, offering a more com-

prehensive and nuanced understanding of the impacts of NCC training on life skill acquisition among cadets.

Conclusion

The comprehensive Impact Assessment Study focused on empowering National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets through Life Skills Education and Training has proven to be a rewarding pursuit. The study's findings and interpretations closely parallel the abstract, affirming the efficacy of NCC training in nurturing essential life skills among cadets. Employing the Life Skill Assessment Scale yielded promising results, showcasing elevated scores across various dimensions and endorsing the triumph of the NCC programme in fortifying these pivotal skills. With a substantial respondent count of 100, this study establishes a strong groundwork for future research endeavours. To deepen comprehension, expanding the demographic scope and diversifying respondent profiles would enable a more comprehensive analysis, amplifying the applicability of the findings. This study marks a significant milestone in acknowledging the positive impact of NCC training on life skills, highlighting the potential for ongoing exploration and expansion of such initiatives in moulding multifaceted individuals for leadership roles in the future.

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The Need Analysis of the Implementation of Life Skills in Schools after the Pandemic

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Abstract

Apparently, the situation seems to be improving after the retreating of the pandemic Covid 19. Largely, schools are making every effort to reach out to adolescents as they have been significantly affected due to their digital and online classes. The educational institutions and teachers have had a herculean task to help them cope with the loss of their studies. The adolescents seem to have become disinterested to the normal mode of learning. There is too much of pressure on the teachers to make learning more interesting as well as upgrade them to the level of their classes. Not all the schools can carry on with the digital mode of learning due to lack of finances. Mostly, State Board schools lack resources to provide latest facilities. In such situation, the adolescents are put to a lot of mental stress.

This study attempts to explore life skills of adolescents in the age group of 11-13 after the pandemic. The self-made questionnaire consisting of 100 items were administered to the 60 boys and 60 girls of standard seven. The data was collected and subjected to statistical analysis using the mean, SD and t-test. The result revealed that there is no significant difference between the genders with regard to their life skills after the pandemic, except there is a significant difference between their coping with emotions.

Keywords: Adolescence, covid 19, life skills, schools

Introduction

After the alarming era of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools around the world have gradually returned to their regular routines. Classrooms are once again filled with the vibrancy of daily academic and co-curricular ac-

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tivities. However, beneath this surface of normalcy lies the deep and lasting impact the pandemic has had on the emotional, social, and psychological well-being of students. Adolescents and young learners, in particular, have faced disruptions that have affected not only their academic progress but also their personal development. This calls for a critical need to reassess and strengthen the implementation of life skills education in schools to help students rebuild resilience, adaptability, and holistic well-being in the post-pandemic era.

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, about 1.6 billion students across more than 190 countries were affected by school closures. In India alone, around 1.5 million schools were shut down, disrupting the education of nearly 247 million children in elementary and secondary levels. Among them, girls from marginalized communities were especially at risk of dropping out. A UNESCO report (August 2020) estimated that even after schools reopened, around 11 million girls worldwide might never return to school. The closure of schools and colleges not only interrupted learning but also affected the overall health and well-being of children and adolescents. These effects are long-lasting and would certainly continue to influence future generations.

In response to the large number of adolescents whose education and well-being were disrupted by the pandemic, international agencies took a coordinated action to restore learning and safeguard children's futures. Global organizations such as WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank worked together to protect children's education and well-being. In 2021, UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank launched Mission: Recovering Education 2021 to help countries ensure learning continuity and address learning losses. UNICEF also implemented the Mission: Recovering Education in Humanitarian Settings across 27 countries to reach vulnerable children in crisis and conflict areas. To further support education recovery, UNICEF, UNESCO, USAID, the Gates Foundation, the UK's FCDO, and the World Bank developed the RAPID Framework for Learning Recovery and Acceleration, focusing on five key actions- reaching every child, assessing learning, prioritizing foundational skills, improving instruction, and promoting psychosocial well-being. They also released a Guide for Learning Recovery and Acceleration to help countries apply these strategies effectively. Progress was tracked through global monitoring tools such as the Global Education Recovery Tracker (GERT), highlighting the UN's collective commitment to safeguard children's learning and development during and after the pandemic. (UNICEF 2022)

Evidence from several studies shows that regular school attendance is essential for children's academic, social, and emotional growth. Schools help students interact, build relationships, and receive the social and emotional support they need for healthy development.

Both boys and girls experienced negative effects during the pandemic, though in different ways. Many families faced severe financial loss, pushing several below the poverty line, which increased stress and uncertainty (Van & Parolin, 2020). The virus caused loss of life, health problems, and widespread anxiety. Isolation, fear, and sudden lifestyle changes led to mental health issues among students. The Global Burden of Disease Study (WHO, 2022) found that young people and women faced higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Teachers too experienced anxiety due to sudden school closures and the shift to online teaching (Talidong & Toquero, 2020).

Gender roles also influenced remote learning. In many poor households, girls were expected to help with household chores while boys were encouraged to earn money. Often, families could not afford separate digital devices, and priority for online learning was given to boys. This digital divide further limited girls' access to education and opportunities for growth.

According to A. T. Jersild (1978), "Adolescence is a span of years during which boys and girls move from childhood to adulthood in all aspects mentally, emotionally, socially and physically". Adolescence is a stage of life than a mere age - a period of shift from childhood to adulthood. This is an exclusive period in life since it is a time of intense physical, psychological and cognitive development (WHO, 2011). Some of the psychologists use this term synonymously with 'pubescence' or growth in maturity. Others define it as the transitional period of life when the child experiences a number of changes- physiologically, emotionally and intellectually. Physical growth and development during the adolescence period have a great impact on the emotional life of the young. They begin to possess new ideas, thoughts and attitudes. They desire to prove themselves in the society to shape their own identity.

Life Skills

Life Skills are defined as 'abilities for positive behaviour that enable and empower individuals to deal effectively with the demands and meet challenges of everyday life.' (WHO, 1997). Life skills are aptitudes that sustains a person's physical, mental and emotional health as well as a young person's capacity to deal with the realities of life. (Khera & Khosla, 2012).

Life skills develop self-awareness, promote interpersonal skills that help people to empathize with others, communicate effectively to develop social skills, think critically and creatively to resolve problems, cope with emotions and cope with stress to build relationships, thus live their lives in a healthy and productive way.

Aim

The main aim of the study is to explore the nature of life skills of the adolescents after the pandemic.

Objective

- To analyze the difference in life skills between boys and girls after the pandemic.
- To examine the differences in each of the ten core life skills between boys and girls after the pandemic.

Hypothesis

H1. There is no significant difference between the life skills of boys and girls after the pandemic.

H2. There is no significant difference between the ten core life skills of boys and girls after the pandemic.

Research Tools

In the present study a set of self-made Life Skills Questionnaire consisting of 100 items were administered to the participants. The questionnaire consisted of items indicating 10 core life skills as per the World Health Organisation framework namely- Self-Awareness, Empathy, Effective Communication, Interpersonal Relationship, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Problem Solving, Decision Making, Coping with Emotions, Coping with Stress. Few of the statements included were items pertaining to the post pandemic situations particularly based on the above life skills.

Sample

A total of 120 participants were selected randomly comprising of 60 boys and 60 girls between the age group of 11 to 13. The participants were selected from three schools from the Mumbai suburbs who follow the Maharashtra State Board curriculum. The participants belonged to the lower middle class income group living on monthly salary received from private sectors.

Statistical Data Analysis

The mean, standard deviation, and t- test were analyzed by the statistical analysis of two-tailed p -value score.

Table No. 1: Scores of the ten core Life skills of the Boys and Girls separately are recorded below: Self Awareness (SA), Empathy (EM), Effective Communication (EC), Interpersonal Relationship (IR), Critical Thinking (CRI), Creative Thinking (CRE), Problem Solving (PS), Decision Making (DM), Coping with Emotions (CE), Coping with Stress (CS).

Scores of the Life Skills (LS) of Boys and Girls are recorded in the Table No. 1

		N	? x	? x ₂	Mean	SD	SE	Varianc e	df	Mean _a - Mean _b	t	p
SA	B	60	1919	6209	31.98	3.50	0.45	12.25	118	0.71	+1	0.31
	G	60	1877	5973	31.28	4.14	0.53	17.18				
EM	B	60	1811	5588	30.18	4.54	0.58	20.69	118	0.03	0.04	0.96
	G	60	1809	5586	30.15	4.74	0.61	22.46				
EC	B	60	1769	5334	29.48	4.48	0.57	20.08	118	0.1	0.13	0.89
	G	60	1763	5281	29.38	4.15	0.53	17.22				
IR	B	60	1777	5360	29.61	4.07	0.52	16.57	118	-0.05	-0.07	0.94
	G	60	1780	5375	29.66	4.01	0.51	16.09				
CRI	B	60	1861	5905	31.01	4.74	0.61	22.55	118	0.13	0.17	0.86
	G	60	1853	5817	30.88	4.00	0.51	16.07				
CRE	B	60	1767	5319	29.45	4.42	0.57	19.57	118	0.05	0.07	0.94
	G	60	1764	5272	29.42	3.82	0.49	14.61				
PS	B	60	1533	4010	25.55	3.99	0.51	15.94	118	0.93	1.3	0.19
	G	60	1477	3724	24.61	3.95	0.49	14.95				
DM	B	60	1921	6286	32.01	4.80	0.62	23.06	118	0.01	0.02	0.98
	G	60	1920	6226	32	3.72	0.48	13.89				
CE	B	60	1622	454	27.03	5.23	0.67	27.38	118	-1.98	-2.26	0.02
	G	60	1741	5162	29.01	4.32	0.55	18.72				
CS	B	60	1728	5097	28.8	4.53	0.58	20.53	118	-0.7	-0.85	0.39
	G	60	1770	5337	29.5	4.43	0.57	19.71				
LS	B	60	17708	5253	295.13	21.36	2.75	456.45	118	-0.2	-0.05	0.96
	G	60	17720	5263	295.33	22.45	2.89	504.22				

P value is $P > 0.05$, coping with emotions is $p < 0.05$.

It is noticed that there is no significant difference between the life skills of boys and girls. Therefore, the hypothesis 1 is accepted at the $p > 0.05$ level.

It is observed that the hypothesis 2 i.e. of the ten core life skills – Self-awareness, Empathy, Effective Communication, Interpersonal relationship, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Problem Solving, Decision Making and Coping with Stress have no significant difference between boys and girls, but of these Coping with Emotions shows a lesser level of p value i.e. $p < 0.05$. So the hypothesis 2 is rejected as there is a difference between the boys and girls score as seen above i.e. 0.02 where $p < 0.05$ level.

Observations

The difference between the scores of boys and girls with regards to coping with emotions could be due to the fact that both the genders differ in the handling of their emotions. There is a need to find out why and what could be the difference between them through another study.

Many studies have claimed that there is need for counselling and guidance to adolescents in emotional, psychological, social, academic and career aspects. They require to be equipped with the ability to cope with their personal and professional life. It cannot be said that adolescents with certain background only suffer from emotional problems. Every adolescent be it a boy or a girl should be well trained with the life skills for being able to handle every situation in life.

Findings of Focus Group Discussion

In a group discussion that was part of the study with the 50 participants of the High School section, 34 of them responded negatively to the COVID-19, 10 participants felt that they could cope up with the situation with the help of their parents and the remaining 6 were not able to respond. The participants felt that the pandemic created panic, frustration, disgust, boredom, disinterest in studies, lack of socialization, and no play time with friends and peers. They complained that they missed the physical presence of their teachers and other students in the classrooms. Similar was the response from the parents as they observed their children in their homes. The teachers found the students disinterested in their studies, lacked patience, distracted and engaged in other unfavourable behaviour. Similar behaviour pattern was noticed even after the pandemic. Girls displayed anxiety about their future studies as they felt that their parents were more inclined to encourage their brothers due to financial constraints. Girls showed tendency to withdraw from their groups and preferred to be alone.

Suggestions

The findings of the present study show that there is a significant difference between boys and girls with regard to coping with emotions, hence it is necessary to conduct further research to find out the cause for the difference in coping with emotions.

Recommendations

The findings of the present study indicate that, except for the skill of coping with emotions, there is no significant difference between boys and girls

in other life skills. Based on this, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Policy makers could allocate resources for training professionals who can support adolescents in managing their emotions.
- Educational institutions should appoint qualified counsellors to guide adolescents during periods of confusion and emotional distress.
- Schools and colleges should organize life skills training programmes to equip students with the competencies needed not only to effectively handle emotions but the challenges in daily life.
- Teachers should be provided with training to help adolescents develop positive social interactions with their peers in the school environment.
- Further research should be conducted to assess the specific emotional coping needs of boys and girls separately, so that targeted interventions can be designed for those who require additional support.
- Girls should be encouraged and provided with opportunities for personal growth to help them overcome fear and anxiety.

Limitations of the Study

The present study has certain limitations that need to be acknowledged. The sample size was limited to 120 participants (60 boys and 60 girls) from standard seven, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to a wider adolescent population. The study focused only on a specific age group (11–13 years) and a limited number of schools, which may not represent students from different regions, socio-economic backgrounds, or educational boards. Being a cross-sectional study conducted after the pandemic, it captures only a single time frame and does not account for changes in life skills over time. In addition, contextual factors such as parental support, type of schooling, and digital learning exposure were not examined, which might have influenced adolescents' life skills development.

Conclusion

The present study affirms that the scores of life skills of both boys and girls have no difference except a significant difference with their coping with emotions. This could be due to reasons that could be further explored by some research in the future. The Pandemic Covid 19 has been detrimental to the overall growth of adolescents and in particular with their coping with emotions. Through various research findings and opinions, it could be

concluded that due to lack of social interactions, the adolescents have had a negative impact on their emotional growth. The female adolescents could be largely affected due to social taboos and restrictions. School closure in India impacted 320 million children enrolled from pre-primary to tertiary levels of education, and out of these 158 million were females (UNESCO, 2020). There is a need for a policy to provide appropriate training module in life skills so that further damage to the lives and psycho-social and mental well being of the adolescents could be prevented in the future.

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Emotional Intelligence of Teaching Faculty in Health Science Institutes Affiliated with Purbanchal University in Nepal

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a vital skill for everyone, including teachers. In Nepal, there is limited academic research on this topic. The study aims to examine the level of EI among teaching faculty in health science institutes and explore the associated socio-demographic variables.

A cross-sectional design was conducted and the study investigated emotional intelligence (EI) in the health science faculty at Purbanchal University, Nepal. In total, 92 faculty members of Health Sciences programs such as Pharmacy, Nursing and Public Health were enrolled in a study. Data was collected in June–July 2023 using pre-existing instruments, administered through a survey approach that included sections on sociodemographic information and emotional intelligence, analyzed using a Likert scale. Reliability and validity were ensured. Ethical approval was obtained, maintaining individual, education institute confidentiality and privacy. The reliability statistics confirm robust internal consistency for emotional intelligence dimensions, enhancing measurement stability (Cronbach's alpha: 0.812 to 0.892).

Utilizing descriptive and chi-square analyses, the study found that participants had a mean age of 35.457 years. Emotional intelligence (EI) varied across dimensions: self-awareness (SA) at 52.2%, self-management (SM) at 58.1%, social awareness (SAA) at 62.5%, and social management (SMM) at 50.5%. A noteworthy percentage scored approximately 50%, emphasizing the average knowledge about EI. Marital status showed significance ($\chi^2 = 0.010$, $p = 0.05$), suggesting a

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positive impact on self-awareness.

The study found that emotional intelligence (EI) is vital for teachers to increase engagement and well-being. However, teachers scored approximately 50% in EI knowledge. Researchers suggest introducing skill-cultivating intervention packages of EI training and exposures to the faculty members in a planned manner through the concerned management and executives to foster better relationships among, teachers, students, and stakeholders creating a sustainable environment in academic settings.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, health science institutes, teaching faculty.

Introduction

In today's evolving society, emotional intelligence (EI) is crucial for navigating challenges. (Goleman, D. et al., 2013; Thapa, P. et al., 2023). EI fosters self-awareness, self-management, and social skills vital for professional success. (Goleman, D. et al., 2013; Thapa, P. et al., 2023; Mayer, J. D. & Cobb, C. D. 2000; Schutte, N. S 1998). While well-established in developed nations, (Goleman, D. et al. 2013; Schutte, N. S 1998), its importance is growing in places like Nepal, (Thapa, P. et al., 2023; Thapa, P. et al., 2021) influenced by societal shifts, COVID-19 impacts, (Llop-Gironés et.al. 2021) and increased social media usage (Thapa, B., Adhikari, K., & Thapa, P. P. 2023). Recognizing educators' pivotal role in shaping the healthcare workforce (Pudashini, P et. al., 2023), prioritizing their EI is paramount. In Nepal's dynamic context, understanding and enhancing this skill not only improves educators' well-being (Pudashini, P et. al., 2023; Thapa, P et.al., 2022) but also enriches student learning (Thapa P et.al., 2023). In an era of rapid global change (Thapa, P. Rana, H. et.al., 2023), EI becomes a vital tool for navigating complexities with resilience and empathy in Nepal (Thapa P, Giridharan B. et.al., 2022; Thapa PP, Rana H et.al., 2022; Thapa, P., Konnur, R. 2022).

There are numerous researches conducted about emotional intelligence and teachers (Thapa PP, Rana et.al., 2023; Thapa P, Konnur RG et.al, 2022; Singh, J. D. 2015). In this instance, a study by Singh (2015) reveals that the emotional intelligence of secondary-level educators is about average (Singh J 2015). Similarly, a study by Kuchy and Thilagavathy (2017) revealed that the level of EI among high school teachers for the entire sample and various sub-samples is at an average level. Another study by Chapa-gain (2020) revealed that university-level teachers in Nepal have moderately high EI. However, teachers in public sector institutions exhibit high-

er EI compared to those in private sector institutions. Likewise, a study by Adilogullari I. (2011) demonstrated that teachers' mean level of EI at the middle level was 3.28. In conclusion, numerous studies conducted in developing countries like India and Nepal have demonstrated a moderate level of emotional intelligence among teachers (Kuchy SA, Thilagavathy T. 2017; Chapagain BR. 2020; Adilogullari I. 2011). However, these studies indicate that emotional intelligence is a vital skill to enhance teaching and learning engagement and well-being, which is essential for a sense of purpose in life (Singh J 2015; Chapagain BR. 2020; Adilogullari I. 2011).

The rationale behind this research lies in the recognition of the intricate relationship between EI and effective performance (Goleman, D., 2013; Thapa P, Bhattarai H 2023; Schutte, N. et. al. 1998). In the context of health sciences education, (Thapa P, Bhattarai H et.al. 2023; Thapa P, Bhatta R et.al. 2021) empathy (Thapa P, Konnur RG et.al, 2022), communication (Thapa P, Konnur RG et.al, 2022), and resilience (Singh J 2015) are paramount. The EI of faculty members directly influences students' learning experiences. (Daniel Goleman, et.al., 2013; Kuchy SA, Thilagavathy T 2017). Investigating the EI levels (Thapa P, Bhatta R, et.al., 2021) of teaching faculty in these institutes (Thapa P, Bhattarai H, et.al., 2023; Kuchy SA, Thilagavathy T 2017; Chapagain, B. R. 2020) is crucial for identifying strengths and areas for improvement, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of educational practice (Kuchy SA, Thilagavathy T 2017; Chapagain, B. R. 2020).

However, in Nepal, there is limited research on EI encompassing all four dimensions. This study aims to understand each competence of EI (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social management) at personal and social levels. The research offers practical insights and proposes interventions for cultivating an EI culture—a crucial skill contributing to self-awareness, regulation, and improved social skills, including empathy and relationship-building. Socio-demographic variables, such as gender, age, and marital status, pinpoint areas for improvement in optimizing service delivery within teaching organizations. Marital status (Thapa P, Akashe S, Bhattarai H. 2023; Jha A, Singh I. 2012) pinpoint areas for improvement in optimizing service delivery within teaching organizations.

Methodology

The research employs a descriptive cross-sectional research design to examine the emotional intelligence of teaching faculty in health science insti-

tutes affiliated with Purbanchal University in Nepal. Purbanchal University is situated in the eastern part of Nepal and offers various faculties, including health sciences programs such as nursing, public health, and pharmacy. A total of 92 faculty participated in this study, collected from an unknown population, as institutions were not willing to disclose the total number of faculty. In this regard, the researchers decided to calculate samples with an unknown population using Cochran's formula to define the research population, aiding in estimating sample size with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.

Data collection was conducted in June–July 2023 through a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on research objectives, an extensive literature review, consultations with research experts, and reliability (Table 1) and validity testing.

The instrument in this study employed previous studies based on the emotional intelligence competency model, consisting of two sections: Section “A” comprised socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, and marital status and Section “B” included emotional intelligence dimensions used by previous researchers in their studies, such as self-awareness (SA) (Thapa P, Bhattarai H, et.al. 2023; Schutte NS, 1998; Thapa P, Akashe S et.al. 2023), self-management (SM) (Thapa P, Bhattarai H, et.al., 2023; Schutte NS, 1998; Thapa P, Giridharan B, et.al., 2023), social awareness (SAA) (Thapa P, Bhattarai H, et.al., 2023; Schutte NS, 1998; Thapa P, Konnur RG, et.al., 2022) and social management (SMM) (Thapa P, Bhattarai H, et.al., 2023; Schutte NS, 1998). The Likert scale with five points ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always) was used for responses.

Regarding Section B, emotional intelligence dimensions of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social management were assessed with 22 items. The total scores possible on the scale range from 55 to 110, with higher scores indicating higher emotional intelligence (EI). Scores ≤ 55 are considered low EI (SA, SM, SAA, SMM), while scores ≥ 56 -110 are considered high EI (SA, SM, SAA, SMM). The levels of emotional intelligence were categorized as low and high categories (Thapa P, Konnur RG, et.al. 2022; Thapa P, Akashe S et.al. 2023).

- ≤ 55 = low EI (SA, SM, SAA, and SMM)
- ≥ 56 -110= high, EI (SA, SM, SAA, and SMM)

Reliability and validity were ensured through pilot testing and feedback from research experts. In the pre-testing stages, 10% of the sample size

(approximately 10 participants) participated in testing.

Data analysis involved using SPSS, descriptive statistics, and chi-square tests. Ethical approval was obtained from the Yeti Health Science Academy Institutional Review Committee, approved by the Nepal Health Research Council. The researchers maintained individual confidentiality and privacy and obtained informed consent, adhering to institutional guidelines.

Table 1
Reliability Statistics for the Four Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence Skill Scale and General Self-Efficacy Scale

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Self -Awareness	.847	.848	5
Self-Management	.812	.806	5
Social-Awareness	.892	.893	5
Social-Management	.885	.884	6

The reliability statistics reveal robust internal consistency for the four dimensions of EI skills. Cronbach's alpha values range from .812 to .892, ensuring reliability in self-awareness, self-management, Social-Awareness, and Social- Management. These findings increase the measurement stability of each dimension, with item counts ranging from 5 to 6.

Results

Table 2
Illustrate the socio-demographic characteristics of participants

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Age		
=35	42	45.7
=36	50	54.3
Minimum=24.0, Maximum=51.0, Mean=35.457, Std. Deviation=6.9920		
Gender		
Male	23	25.0
Female	69	75.0
Marital Status		
Unmarried	64	69.6
Married	28	30.4

Table 2 displays the socio-demographic profile of participants. Among them, 45.7% were aged ≤ 35 , while 54.3% were ≥ 36 . The majority were female (75.0%), and 69.6% were unmarried. The mean age was 35.457 (SD = 6.9920).

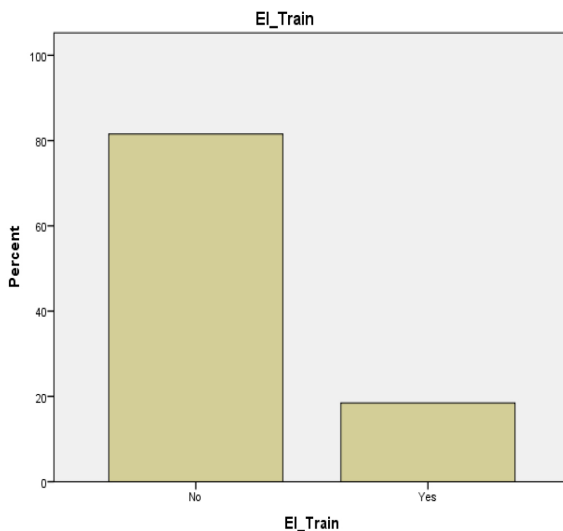


Figure 1: Status of obtaining the training on Emotional Intelligence among the participants

According to the Figure 1, outcome of the participants, 73.5% did not receive emotional intelligence training, while 16.7% reported having undergone such training (N = 92).

Table 3
Illustrate the Emotional Intelligence (SA, SM, SAA, and SMM)
among participants

Variables	Never	Seldom	Quite often	Often	Always
SA1: Recognize my strengths and weaknesses	1.1	7.7	40.7	40.7	9.9
SA2: Perceive others' reactions toward me	1.1	6.7	34.4	45.6	12.2
SA3: Recognize changing situations	1.1	3.3	39.6	46.2	9.9
SA4: Regularly self-assess	1.1	13.2	40.7	37.4	7.7
SA5: Anticipate feedback accurately	1.1	7.7	40.7	40.7	9.9
SM1: Handle emotions in challenges	0.0	3.3	41.8	42.9	12.1
SM2: Motivated to achieve goals and overcome obstacles	0.0	5.5	23.1	45.1	26.4
SM3: Full responsibility for my actions and their consequences	0.0	3.2	21.0	1.6	74.2
SM4: Committed to personal growth and continuous improvement	0.0	4.4	20.0	36.7	38.9
SM5: Prioritize tasks effectively for maximum productivity	2.2	2.2	22.0	48.4	25.3
SAA1: Show empathy	0.0	1.1	22.0	53.8	23.1
SAA2: Grasp the perspectives and needs of those around me	0.0	5.5	35.2	42.9	16.5
SAA3: Contribute to the growth of those under my leadership	0.0	2.2	20.9	33.0	44.0
SAA4: Attentive to social cues and accurately interpret nonverbal communication	2.0	8.0	72.0	2.0	16.0
SMM1: Strong bonds with team	0.0	0.0	15.4	38.5	46.2
SMM2: Manage change	0.0	2.2	26.4	45.1	26.4
SMM3: Sustainable practices	0.0	2.2	28.6	46.2	23.1
SMM4: Communicate with understanding	0.0		29.7	42.9	27.5
SMM5: Strong inspiration	0.0	3.3	16.5	44.0	36.3
SMM6: Resolve conflicts	0.0	3.3	19.8	41.8	35.2

The data as given in table 3 illustrates participants’ emotional intelligence across dimensions. Participants often recognized strengths and weaknesses, perceived others’ reactions, and showed awareness of changing situations. They frequently engaged in self-assessment, anticipated feedback accurately, and handled emotions effectively in challenging situations. Additionally, they displayed commitment to personal growth, empathy, and contribution to team growth.

Table 4
Level of Emotional Intelligence (SA, SM, SAA, and SMM)
among participants

Variables	= 55		> 56 to 110	
	Low EI		High EI	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
SA: Self- Awareness(n=90)	47	52.2	43	47.8
SM: Self- Management (n=62)	36	58.1	26	41.9
SAA: Social-Awareness (n=32)	20	62.5	12	37.5
SMM: Social- Management(n=91)	46	50.5	45	49.5

Table 4 presents emotional intelligence levels among participants: self-awareness (52.2%), self-management (58.1%), social awareness (62.5%), and social management (50.5%). The data indicates low emotional intelligence (≤ 55 score) across various dimensions, with over fifty percent of participants exhibiting a low level of emotional intelligence.

Table 5
One-Sample t-Test of Emotional Intelligence (Self-Awareness,
Self-Management, Social Awareness, and Social Management

Variables	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Self- Awareness	27.910	89	.000	1.47778	1.3726	1.5830
Self-Management	22.465	61	.000	1.41935	1.2930	1.5457
Social- Awareness	15.813	31	.000	1.37500	1.1977	1.5523
Social-Management	28.358	90	.000	1.49451	1.3898	1.5992

A one-sample test revealed a significant mean difference in the emotional intelligence dimension: self-awareness ($M = 1.48$), self-management ($M =$

1.42), socio-awareness (M = 1.38), and socio-management (M = 1.49). All p-values were<.001, indicating substantial differences.

Table 6
Association between socio-demographic variables
and self-awareness among participants

			Total Self-Awareness		Pearson Chi-Square Asymp. Sig. (2- sided)	P=
			Low	High		
Age	=35	Count	23	19	.652	p=0.05
		Expected Count	54.8	45.2		
	=36	Count	24	24		
		Expected Count	50.0	50.0		
Gender	Male	Count	12	11	.996	p=0.05
		Expected Count	52.2	47.8		
	Female	Count	35	32		
		Expected Count	52.2	47.8		
Marital Status	Married	Count	38	24	.010	P=0.05
		Expected Count	61.3	38.7		
	Unmarried	Count	9	19		
		Expected Count	32.1	67.9		

In table 6, no significant association was found between age ($\chi^2=.652$, $p=.005$), gender ($\chi^2=.996$, $p=0.05$), and self- awareness. However, marital status showed significance ($\chi^2 =.010$, $p =0.05$), suggesting a potential influence on self-awareness.

Discussion

In this study, researchers aimed to investigate the level of emotional intelligence (EI) among teachers across different dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social management. Each dimension possesses unique features and plays a crucial role in overall emotional intelligence. Evaluating the level of self-awareness revealed that over fifty percent of participants demonstrated a low level of EI (≤ 55). For this study, researchers established criteria where scores equal to or below 55 indicate a low level, while scores above 56 to 110 suggest higher emotional intelligence. The findings indicate that more than 52.2% of participants scored ≤ 55 in self-awareness, 58.1% in self-management, 62.5% in social awareness, and 50.5% in social management. These results underscore the prevalence of low emotional intelligence scores across participants in various dimensions.

The majority of participants scored below the desired level of emotional intelligence. Several factors are associated with these low levels. As EI is a relatively new concept in Nepal, there are not many studies or interventions focusing on it, particularly in the education field. Consequently, academicians are not very aware of this area. In contrast, many developed countries have integrated EI models into their education systems, revealing that it is an essential skill contributing to engagement, job satisfaction, and teacher well-being.

Numerous studies have explored the significance of emotional intelligence, emphasizing its incredible impact on individual and leadership development. It contributes to enhanced self-understanding, increased self-confidence, self-regulation, and improved social skills and management. Such skills are crucial for fostering relationship development, empathy, resilience, and teamwork. For instance, a study by Birol et al. (2009) reported emotional intelligence levels of 79.2%. Similarly, Singh (2015) found average levels of emotional intelligence but noted that emotionally intelligent teacher educators can perceive and sculpt their own emotions, potentially increasing workplace involvement and reducing stress. Furthermore, Chapagain (2021) revealed that teachers scored moderately in emotional intelligence, highlighting its vital role in enhancing success and satisfaction among teachers. Sociodemographic variables also influence emotional intelligence. Many studies suggest associations between sociodemographic factors such as age, gender, and marital status and their impact on emotional intelligence. However, in the current study, only marital status demonstrated a significant association with self-awareness. The mean age of participants in this study was 35.457 years. Despite evidence indicating the critical role of EI in enhancing personal and professional competence, the majority of participants had not obtained high levels of emotional intelligence. This points to a noticeable lack of training in emotional intelligence within health science faculties.

Based on this evidence, the research suggests implementing a culture that fosters EI interventions at the policy level. Previous evidence has highlighted a significant relationship between EI and well-being, performance, and engagement, emphasizing the potential benefits of prioritizing emotional intelligence in professional development. In the healthcare industry, dealing with human elements necessitates cultivating high levels of EI among individuals to ensure the quality and quantity of services provided. Thus, prioritizing emotional intelligence training and development can significantly contribute to improved outcomes in both educational and healthcare settings.

Limitations And Suggestions

Limitation

The study was limited to a specific geographic region and professional group, such as teachers of health science, which restricts the generalizability of the results. EI levels in other regions or professions may vary. The study administered a cross-sectional approach, collecting data at a single point in time. This limits the ability to infer causality or observe changes in EI over time. EI was assessed through self-reported surveys, which can be subject to biases such as social desirability bias or inaccurate self-assessments. This study did not assess the impact of any specific interventions aimed at improving EI. As a result, it is unclear which approach might be most effective in enhancing EI among teachers. While some sociodemographic variables were considered, the study did not extensively explore how various factors such as educational background, socioeconomic status, or cultural differences might influence EI. Additionally, the sample size might have been small.

Suggestions

Based on the study, several suggestions are recommended. Future studies should include a larger and more diverse professional group and encompass different regions of Nepal to obtain the generalizability of the findings. Another suggestion is to conduct longitudinal studies to provide valuable insights into how EI develops over time and the long-term impact of various interventions. Additionally, researchers suggest incorporating multiple methods of data collection, such as peer assessments and observational approaches, to provide an in-depth understanding of the study.

Implementing and evaluating specific interventions designed to improve EI in educational settings would help identify effective strategies and best practices. Although this study did not discover significant relationships with sociodemographic variables, many studies have indicated their significance. Future studies should select specific sociodemographic variables to explore their impact on EI, supporting intervention packages to enhance EI.

Since EI is a learned and cultivatable skill, educational institutions and policymakers should consider integrating EI training into teacher development programs. Emphasizing EI in professional development can enhance teacher performance and well-being. Finally, collaborative efforts should address the need for cooperation between educational institutions, policy-

makers, and researchers to foster a supportive environment for EI training, ensuring it becomes an integral part of the education system.

By addressing these limitations and following the suggestions, future research can provide more robust and comprehensive insights into EI among teachers, ultimately contributing to better educational outcomes and teacher well-being.

Conclusion

In this study, the investigation into emotional intelligence (EI) levels across dimensions—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social management—reveals a prevalence of low EI scores (≤ 55) among participants. Over 50% scored ≤ 55 in each dimension, emphasizing the need to address emotional intelligence in various facets of personal and professional life. The study underscores the integral role of EI in individual and leadership development, impacting self-understanding, confidence, regulation, and social skills. Notably, self-awareness, a vital skill for teaching faculty, demonstrated a positive correlation with performance. However, deficiencies were observed in self-management, social skills like empathy, and social management, suggesting a need for intervention.

Sociodemographic factors, particularly marital status, showed a significant association with self-awareness. The study highlights a critical need for EI interventions in the healthcare industry due to their human-centric nature. The mean age of 35.457 indicates a lack of EI among participants, urging the implementation of policies fostering EI at the institutional level. This aligns with prior evidence linking EI to well-being, performance, and engagement in healthcare.

The study suggests cultivating EI stability for healthcare faculties to navigate patient care challenges sensitively. However, limitations such as a small sample size, urban focus, and a restricted demographic permit carefulness. Future research should explore diverse demographics, employ varied study techniques, and extend to different professions for a comprehensive understanding of EI's impact. Additional investigation into various EI dimensions and sociodemographic variables will enrich insights for effective interventions.

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Game-Changer for Change: A Gamified Approach to Revolutionise Waste Management Education

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Abstract

Waste management faces a critical challenge due to the prevalent practice of indiscriminate waste dumping, leading to environmental degradation in landfills and wetlands. Conventional awareness methods such as posters and videos have proven inadequate to reshape human behaviour. This study presents a promising solution through the development of an Interactive Educational Game, leveraging the universal affinity for childhood mobile gaming experiences to instil waste separation habits in future generations.

This research focuses on the 3R Waste Management Game, a mobile application crafted in collaboration with environmental non governmental organisations (NGOs), including Surakshi, EILS Project, and LKYN. The primary objective is transforming environmental education into an engaging and interactive experience. The development process, rooted in Rapid Application Development principles, prioritized community input garnered through meetings and insights from environmental professionals. The game features has distinct waste categories – plastic, paper, e-waste, glass, organic, and metals – challenging users to correctly identify and dispose of each item in the appropriate bins. Incorporating gamification techniques enhances the educational aspect, rewarding users with points for accurate waste disposal decisions.

In conclusion, this research underscores the promising potential of gamification in revolutionizing environmental education by harnessing the engaging elements of interactive games. To maximize accessibility, developing a progressive web app is recommended, enabling universal usage without installation across various devices. Moreover, prioritizing

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a higher budget allocation for marketing and promotions over development phases is vital to extending the game's reach and engagement within communities. Additionally, expanding the game's compatibility to Apple devices will widen its accessibility, ensuring that a broader audience can participate in and benefit from this innovative environmental education initiative.

Keywords: Accessibility; Behavioural changes; Environmental education; Waste management; Life skill development; Gamification of education

Introduction

In 2019, the Emotional Intelligence and Life Skills Training Team (EILST) initiated the Lassana Kolonnawa Youth Network with funding from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Global Environment Facility (GEF) / Small Grants Program (SGP) during Phase 06. The youth-led initiative, fueled by a passion for environmental protection, identified waste dumping as a critical threat to the Kolonnawa Wetland. Recognizing the root cause as a lack of knowledge and ingrained habits regarding proper waste disposal, the Youth Network, in collaboration with EILST and Surakshi Institute, responded with innovation in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Inspired by the potential of technology, particularly in applications and website development, the Youth Network embarked on a novel approach: Gamified Environmental Education. With crucial financial support from the Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia Wetland Fund (RRC-EA), the team developed the “3R Waste Management Game.” This mobile game, guided by input from the Ramsar focal point of the Department of Wildlife Conservation, the Kolonnawa Divisional Secretary, and local schools, aimed to transform waste management into an engaging learning experience for all age groups.

Despite Sri Lanka's stunning landscapes, the waste crisis persists, with over 7 million tons generated annually, 80% of which ends up in uncontrolled dump sites or open landfills. This widespread dumping poses significant threats to public health, biodiversity, and the environment. The consequences include leachate contaminating vital water sources, plastic waste harming marine life and uncontrolled waste burning contributing to air pollution.

At the core of this crisis is the failure to segregate waste at its source, hindering recycling and composting efforts and perpetuating environmental

degradation. Waste segregation, following the “3Rs” – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – encourages individuals and communities to prioritize waste minimization. Reducing waste involves consuming less and choosing durable products, while reusing entails re-purposing items to extend their lifespan. Recycling transforms waste materials into new products, conserving resources and reducing environmental footprints.

Embracing the principles of the 3Rs offers communities a tangible pathway to significantly alleviate the burden on waste management systems and contribute to a more sustainable future. This hierarchical approach prioritizes impactful solutions, emphasizing waste minimization and maximizing resource recovery. The implementation of the 3Rs not only fosters a sense of responsibility but also empowers individuals to actively participate in safeguarding the environment for future generations (Wilson, 2013).

Waste segregation transcends mere cleanliness; it emerges as a potent tool for environmental protection and resource recovery. By separating waste at its source, valuable resources such as paper, plastic, and organic matter are diverted from landfills, effectively reducing environmental contamination and mitigating methane gas generation (World Bank, 2018; Wilson, 2013). The segregation of waste opens avenues for recycling, thereby decreasing reliance on new resources, minimizing greenhouse gas emissions, and safeguarding the planet’s health for generations to come (Miezah et al., 2015).

The propensity of individuals to dump waste without segregation arises from a lack of knowledge and ingrained habits. Raising awareness about waste segregation extends beyond achieving cleaner surroundings. It becomes a vehicle for empowering communities to shape a sustainable future. Understanding the significance of waste separation equips individuals with the knowledge and ability to minimize their environmental impact, contributing to the establishment of a circular economy (Tukker et al., 2010). This heightened awareness facilitates informed choices about consumption habits, curbing unnecessary waste generation and promoting responsible resource management (Jackson, 2009).

While traditional methods such as posters and videos have played a crucial role in promoting environmental awareness, their effectiveness in fostering long-term behavioural change has come under scrutiny. Static approaches often struggle to engage individuals and may fall short in creating lasting knowledge or commitment (Cheng & Lin, 2015). Moreover, these meth-

ods may not cater to diverse learning styles, thereby risking the alienation of certain demographic groups. Furthermore, their production and distribution involve environmental and economic costs, raising sustainability concerns (MoE, 2019).

In response to these challenges, innovative approaches to environmental education have become imperative. Games, with their engaging and interactive nature, have emerged as a promising platform for learning and behavioural change. Possessing the ability to capture attention, provide immediate feedback, and immerse players in simulated environments, games hold immense potential for environmental education and the shaping of behaviour (Przybylski et al., 2014; Aldrich, 2005).

Games facilitate active experimentation and exploration, fostering critical thinking essential for addressing environmental challenges. They offer virtual experiences that illustrate the consequences of actions, enhancing learning and promoting lasting behavioural changes (Barab et al., 2009). Recognizing the limitations of traditional environmental education methods, researchers have increasingly turned to gamification as a transformative approach. Gamification incorporates game-design elements and mechanics into non-game contexts, creating immersive and interactive learning experiences that captivate and motivate learners (Deterding et al., 2011).

This paradigm shift toward gamified environmental education is supported by a growing body of research. Studies by Przybylski et al. (2014) highlight the engagement potential of games that incorporate immediate feedback, rewards, and personalized challenges. These elements enhance motivation and sustain attention, fostering deeper understanding and better knowledge retention (Hamari & Koivisto, 2014). Aldrich (2005) further underscores the power of simulated game environments in promoting critical thinking, responsible decision-making, and experimentation with diverse solutions.

The “3R Waste Management Game” stands as an exemplar of the practical application of gamification principles in environmental education. Through the incorporation of point systems, challenges, badges, and engaging narratives, the game transforms waste segregation into a rewarding and motivating experience. Players assume the role of virtual environmental heroes, navigating realistic levels and witnessing the direct consequences of their waste disposal choices. This immersive experience stimulates critical thinking about environmental challenges and empowers players to adopt proactive solutions in their lives.

However, the realization of the full impact of gamified environmental education necessitates strategic planning. Understanding the demographics of mobile game users and selecting an appropriate platform are critical considerations for ensuring accessibility and widespread adoption. Tailoring the game and platform to the target audience maximizes the potential of gamification to empower communities and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Research indicates that mobile gaming is a global phenomenon enjoyed by individuals of all ages and backgrounds. A 2023 report by Newzoo highlights that 2.7 billion people worldwide play mobile games, with the largest user base falling within the 18-34 age range (Newzoo, 2023). This demographic aligns perfectly with the target audience of the 3R Waste Management Game - youth and young adults in the Sri Lankan community. Mobile gaming transcends social and economic boundaries, making it a powerful tool for reaching underserved communities.

The choice of platform plays a crucial role in ensuring accessibility and widespread adoption. In this context, Android emerges as the most suitable platform for launching the 3R Waste Management Game. According to StatCounter, Android held a staggering 72.34% share of the global smartphone operating system market as of October 2023 (StatCounter, 2023). This dominance, particularly in developing countries such as Sri Lanka, ensures wider accessibility for the game. The relative affordability and user-friendliness of Android devices further enhance their suitability for reaching the target audience in Sri Lanka. By focusing on Android as the primary platform, the 3R Waste Management Game can reach a vast and engaged audience, maximizing its potential to promote waste segregation awareness and sustainable waste management practices within the Sri Lankan community and beyond.

Methodology

Sample and Participants:

This study targeted individuals aged 6 to 18 from four Grama Niladhari Divisions in Kolonnawa (Wijayapura, Salamulla, Gothatuwa, Madinnagoda). To ensure representativeness and technical proficiency, the sample comprised 12 youths who had previously participated in the Lassana Kolonnawa Wetland Conservation project's technical training program funded by UNDP GEF/SGP. This prior training provided a valuable foundation for their engagement in the game development process and ensured they possessed the necessary skills to provide meaningful feedback.

Platforms and Tools:

Unity was chosen as the game engine for its versatility and cross-platform compatibility. Adobe Illustrator provided the tools for creating visually appealing and culturally relevant graphics that resonated with the target audience.

Game Design and Development:

A participatory design approach was central to the game's development. This involved conducting community meetings and wetland field trips with the selected youth group. These sessions allowed for in-depth discussions about their preferences for mobile games, their lived experiences with waste management, and their observations of different waste types in their environment. The gathered insights were directly incorporated into the game's concept, mechanics, and visual design, ensuring cultural relevance and effectiveness.

Accessibility and Inclusivity:

Accessibility and inclusivity were prioritized throughout the development process. The game interface and instructions are available in three languages: Sinhala, English, and Tamil to cater to the diverse linguistic landscape of the community and ensure widespread engagement. Additionally, the gameplay mechanics are designed to be intuitive and easy to understand for players of all skill levels.

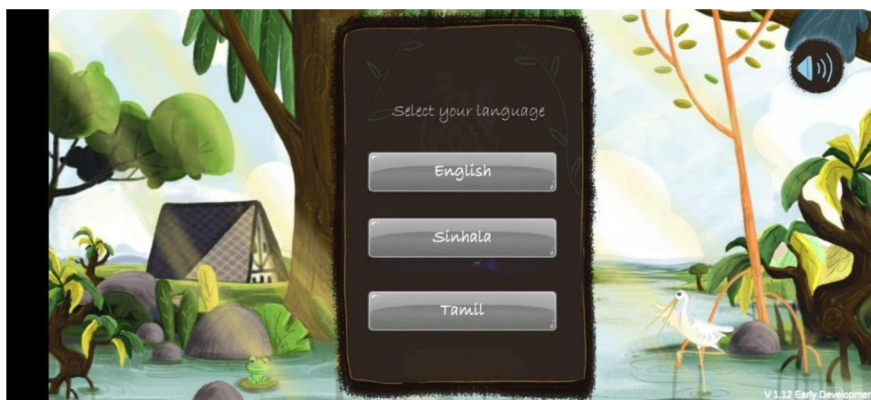


Figure 1 – Home Screen of 3R Waste Management Game

Gameplay Mechanics:

The “3R Waste Management Game” features two levels: a typical house kitchen and a wetland environment. These familiar settings resonate with the target audience and provide a relatable context for the game's objec-

tives. Players embark on a waste-sorting mission, identifying and categorizing waste items into six colour-coded bins representing different material categories: plastic, e-waste, paper, glass, metal, and organic. Correct disposal earns points, and players must dispose of 10 items within a set time limit, adding an element of challenge and excitement.



Figure 2 – Screenshot of 3R Waste Management Game

Collaboration and Endorsements:

The game development process benefited from valuable collaborations. The standard colours for each waste bin were finalized with support from the Waste Management Authority - Western Province, Sri Lanka, ensuring consistency and alignment with regional waste management practices. Additionally, the project received endorsements from various governmental bodies, including the Central Environment Authority, Urban Development Authority, National Institute of Education, Ministry of Education, and media agencies. These endorsements provided valuable recognition and support for the game’s potential and message.



Figure 3 –Screenshot of 3R Waste Management Game



Figure 4 – Screenshot of 3R Waste Management Game

Testing and Launch:

The game underwent pre-testing among youths and school students in Kolonnawa to refine the gameplay mechanics and user interface. Based on the feedback received, further adjustments were made to improve the overall experience. The official launch of the game took place on World Wetland Day 2023 at “Diyasaru Wetland Park” in Colombo, generating significant interest and engagement from the community. A comprehensive social media campaign was also launched to raise awareness about the game and its educational objectives.

Challenges and Solutions:

While the development and launch of the game were successful, some challenges were encountered. Uploading the game to the Google Play Store initially limited accessibility for individuals with older devices. To address this, efforts were made to acquire and test the game on older devices to ensure compatibility and wider accessibility. Additionally, the Unity game engine resulted in a larger file size initially, potentially discouraging downloads. To overcome this, the game was optimized through asset compression and code optimization, significantly reducing the file size and improving user download rates.

Results

The game was successfully developed as a mobile application, accessible in three languages - Sinhala, English, and Tamil, ensuring inclusivity and catering to the diverse linguistic landscape of the Sri Lankan community.

The project garnered significant endorsements from critical stakeholders,

including the Central Environment Authority, Urban Development Authority, National Institute of Education, and Ministry of Education. This reflects the recognition of the game's potential to contribute to national environmental education efforts. Media agencies also expressed their support, indicating a willingness to promote the game and its message of responsible waste management to wider audiences.

Surveys conducted with parents in the Kolonnawa community revealed a clear preference for educational mobile games like the "3R Waste Management Game". Parents recognized the game's potential to instil positive environmental values and knowledge in their children while offering an engaging and interactive learning experience.

These results demonstrate the successful development and implementation of a community-based, gamified approach to waste management education. The widespread endorsements and parental preference further validate the project's potential to impact environmental awareness and behaviour change within the Kolonnawa community and beyond.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The "3R Waste Management Game" stands as a testament to the transformative power of gamification in environmental education. By skillfully blending entertainment with practical learning, the game offers a promising pathway towards fostering environmentally conscious individuals and communities. The project's success underscores the potential of technology, when adapted to diverse contexts and needs, to contribute significantly to global waste management efforts.

However, the journey from concept to reality presented valuable lessons. One key takeaway lies in the importance of considering technological accessibility and resource limitations. To create a truly inclusive and impactful gaming experience, future initiatives should explore tools and techniques that minimize resource consumption on mobile devices and simplify the development process. This could involve optimizing graphics, reducing file size, and utilizing cross-platform development tools.

In light of this, we recommend exploring the development of a Progressive Web App (PWA) alongside the existing mobile application. PWAs offer the advantages of accessibility through web browsers, potentially reaching a wider audience with limited internet data or older devices. Additionally,

developing an iOS version of the game would cater to those using iPhones and iPads, further expanding the game's reach and impact.

Furthermore, ensuring the game's success goes beyond its technical aspects. To maximize adoption and engagement, investing in promotion and app store optimization (ASO) is crucial. Strategic marketing campaigns and effective keyword optimization can elevate the game's visibility, making it readily discoverable for its target audience.

Budget allocation in such initiatives should consider not only development costs but also promotional efforts. By strategically dividing resources, projects can optimize their reach and influence, ensuring a greater return on investment for environmental education initiatives.

In conclusion, the "3R Waste Management Game" is a valuable model for future projects at the intersection of gamification and environmental education. By incorporating the lessons learned and implementing the recommended advancements, we can continue to develop engaging and accessible tools that empower individuals and communities to embrace sustainable practices and build a greener future.

Discussion

The journey from conceptualization to the development and implementation of the "3R Waste Management Game" has been marked by significant achievements and valuable lessons. This discussion section delves into the successes, challenges, and recommendations gleaned from this transformative endeavour at the intersection of gamification and environmental education.

Successes:

Community Engagement: The participatory approach employed in the game's development ensured cultural relevance and effectiveness. Insights from community meetings and wetland field trips with a selected youth group provided valuable perspectives, contributing to the game's success.

Endorsements from Stakeholders: The project garnered substantial endorsements from critical stakeholders, including the Central Environment Authority, Urban Development Authority, National Institute of Education, and Ministry of Education. Media agencies expressed their support, signifying a collective acknowledgement of the game's potential contribution to national environmental education efforts.

Multilingual Accessibility: Recognizing the linguistic diversity of the Sri

Lankan community, the game was developed to support three languages: Sinhala, English, and Tamil. This inclusive approach enhances accessibility, ensuring a broader audience can engage with the educational content.

Parental Preference: Surveys conducted with parents in the Kolonnawa community revealed a clear preference for educational mobile games like the “3R Waste Management Game.” Parents acknowledged the game’s potential to instill positive environmental values and knowledge in their children while offering an engaging and interactive learning experience.

Successful Launch: The game was successfully launched on World Wetland Day 2023 at “Diyasaru Wetland Park” in Colombo, marking a significant step toward raising awareness about waste management practices.

Challenges:

Technological Accessibility: Limited access to updated devices among the population posed a challenge, particularly for Android users. Efforts were made to address this issue by gaining access to outdated devices, emphasizing the need for consideration of technological accessibility in future initiatives.

File Size Concerns: The use of the Unity game engine resulted in a larger file size, leading to user reluctance to download the game. Ongoing efforts were made to optimize the file size, highlighting the importance of balancing technical aspects for user convenience.

Colour Code Standardization: The absence of international standard colour codes for waste categories posed a challenge. The game utilized colour codes recommended by the Waste Management Authority - Western Province, Sri Lanka, underlining the need for standardized guidelines in waste management.

Recommendations:

Progressive Web App (PWA): To enhance accessibility and reach a wider audience, the development of a Progressive Web App (PWA) alongside the existing mobile application is recommended. PWAs offer the advantage of accessibility through web browsers, potentially reaching individuals with limited internet data or older devices.

iOS Version Development: Considering the popularity of Apple devices, developing an iOS version of the game is recommended. This expansion would cater to iPhone and iPad users, broadening the game’s reach and impact.

Optimization and Resource Minimization: Future initiatives should explore tools and techniques to minimize resource consumption on mobile devices. This could involve optimizing graphics, reducing file size, and utilizing cross-platform development tools to create a more inclusive and impactful gaming experience.

Strategic Marketing: To maximize adoption and engagement, investing in strategic marketing campaigns and effective app store optimization (ASO) is crucial. Elevating the game's visibility through promotional efforts and keyword optimization can enhance its discoverability for the target audience.

Budget Allocation: A strategic division of resources between development costs and promotional efforts is essential. Allocating a higher budget for marketing and promotions over development phases ensures a broader reach and increased influence on environmental education initiatives.

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The authors express gratitude to the Emotional Intelligence and Life Skills Training Team (EILST) and collaborating organizations, including Surakshi, EILS Project, and LKYN, for their support and partnership in the development of the “3R Waste Management Game.” The valuable contributions of stakeholders, endorsing bodies, and the wider community are acknowledged with appreciation.

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Empowering Minds, Building Resilience: Life Skills and Emotional Intelligence in Cult Prevention

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Abstract

Cults are harmful organizations that impact people's well-being physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. The global increase in cults raises concerns for society's safety and health. This study explores the importance of recognizing cults as a life skill, focusing on emotional intelligence. This research review aims to uncover the connections between emotional intelligence, life skills, and preventing cult involvement. The study analyzes existing literature to emphasize the crucial role of recognizing cults as a fundamental life skill. The study reviews 60 research papers to examine how emotional intelligence and life skills relate to susceptibility to cult involvement. The goal is to provide insights into the proactive role emotional intelligence and life skills can play in preventing individuals from falling prey to cult influence. The findings highlight a strong connection between emotional intelligence and life skills, showing that they enhance each other. The study underscores the critical importance of emotional intelligence and life skills in protecting individuals from the influence of cults. The article emphasizes the need for research to increase awareness and develop effective prevention strategies against cults. It suggests that emotional intelligence is a key life skill, helping individuals navigate challenges and make informed decisions. The study contributes to a broader understanding of emotional intelligence, especially in Asia, particularly Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Asia, awareness programs, cults, cult prevention, decision-making, emotional intelligence, global scenario, life skills, resilience, Sri Lanka.

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Introduction

In today's complex modern world, adeptly navigating various risks is crucial (Sakurai, 2006; 2007a). Legal proceedings involving "cult cases" cover various issues, from solicitation ordinances to tax statuses, zoning regulations, and labour law violations (Heffron v. Soc'y for Krishna Consciousness 1981). The tragic Easter Sunday attacks in Sri Lanka, claiming over 250 lives, marked the deadliest assault in the country's history. These events underscore the marks of violent extremism, with connections to global entities like ISIS and local organizations, namely the National Thawheedh Jamaath (NTJ) and Jammiyathul Millathu Ibrahim (JMI) (Father, two brothers of Sri Lanka suicide bombings mastermind killed in gun battle 2019, April 28).

South Asia, particularly susceptible to new religious movements like ISIS, becomes a breeding ground, targeting the youth with narratives of anger and hatred under the guise of religion. Countering the allure of cults like ISIS among educated youth requires more than military force, an imperative counter-engagement strategy where a liberal democratic state provides legitimate space for democratic dissent is crucial (Singh, S. 2019). While cultism may not be among the most prevalent phenomena compared to other public health or social problems, it demands attention due to its nuanced and potentially harmful nature Josep, M. (2006). This research review aims to promote a healthy lifestyle in response to the challenges of emerging cults and extremist ideologies in the contemporary world.

This review seeks to clarify the definition and characteristics of cults, examining cult impact on individuals, exploring life skills, understanding emotional intelligence, and investigating the inter-connectedness of these elements. The research and reviews in this field contribute to a holistic comprehension.

Definition and Characteristics of Cults

This comprehensive and interdisciplinary research review investigates the complex phenomenon of cults, shedding light on their characteristics, societal implications, and psychological dimensions. The literature, drawn from religious studies, sociology, psychology, and educational research, offers diverse academic perspectives. To define "cult," a systematic review of scholarly articles, books, and legal cases was conducted. Campbell (1977) positions the cult as an empirical construct, categorizing it based on observable phenomena. Goldberg and Goldberg (1982) argue that all groups wield the power to either harm or heal, emphasizing the influential

force inherent in group dynamics. Psychologically, cults are marked by the undue influence of charismatic leaders, involving processes of indoctrination and mind control. The term is understood as denoting small religious groups perceived as outside the mainstream, holding views considered unusual (Wallace, 1985). Barker (1986) explored various theories explaining why individuals join movements, delving into discussions about whether they are ‘brainwashed’ and examining the influences exerted by wider society on membership through both pushes and pulls.

Friesen (1993) examines cult-related institutions and historical circumstances to understand provincial worship in Asia. Gasde (1997) posited that cultic groups differentiate themselves from benign groups through the utilization of unethical means for persuasion, control, and exploitation. The general perception is that individuals joining cults are often viewed as deviating from the norm, with attributed psychological problems after leaving cults seen as personal deficiencies. Gasde and Block (1998) conducted an evaluation of perceptions from 61 former members, ranging from 18 to 79 years old, of the Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT). The assessment encompassed the participants’ views on the group’s abusiveness, their psychological distress levels, personality characteristics, and reported quality of close personal relationships.

While terms like “religion,” “ritual,” and “narrative” receive extensive scholarly attention, “cult” remains relatively understudied in the field of religion (Christensen, 2009). Shupe’s work (2011) acknowledges the emergence of innovative or new religious movements (NRMs), commonly referred to as “cults,” across diverse societies. This phenomenon is accompanied by the presence of counter-movement or anti-cult groups (ACMs), illustrating the complex interplay between religious movements and their opposition. Barker’s insights (2014) into New Religious Movements (NRMs) emphasize their dynamic and evolving nature. While NRMs originate from diverse positions, their shared characteristic is rapid and radical change. Barker’s perspective contributes to understanding the inherent fluidity and unpredictability of these new religious expressions. Barker’s exploration (2011) sheds light on the entwined perceptions of cults and violence in the public consciousness. The association between cults and violence is a prevalent stereotype, and Barker’s work encourages a nuanced understanding of this relationship. Day and Kleinmann’s lens (2017) views radicalization through the perspective of cult literature, suggesting that examining affective, social, and organizational ties within a movement is crucial. This approach allows for a focus on the internal dynamics of radical-

ization, setting aside counter-ideology considerations. Martellini and Rao's concern (2017) centers on the radicalization of scientifically well-educated individuals and the potential misuse of their knowledge in illegal weapons development for terrorist purposes or extremist cults. Richardson (2018) traces the historical development of the term from Troeltsch's origins to modern interpretations by researchers studying new religious groups.

Deslippe (2021) observes a shift where "cult" has become a pejorative term, often dismissive of minority religions and potentially harmful to them within the study of New Religious Movements. The review navigates the multifaceted nature of the term "cult," drawing on diverse disciplinary perspectives such as religious studies, sociology, and psychology. Scholars' preference for the term "New Religious Movement" (NRM) to mitigate negative connotations is highlighted, emphasizing the importance of terminology sensitivity. Kets de Vries (2021) reflects on the puzzling attraction to cults, drawing uncomfortable associations with notorious groups like the Manson family, Heaven's Gate, Jonestown, and esoteric eastern religious movements like the Hare Krishna movement.

The term "cult" carries conflicting definitions across scholarly fields, with distinctions often based on factors such as group size, unique beliefs, outcomes of actions, and the perceived role of the leader (Woody, 2009). A notable case, the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, faced legal scrutiny in 2008, revealing allegations of abuse within the polygamous community (Fox, 2009). "Cults in Our Midst" contributes valuable insights into helping individuals escape cult entrapments and recover from the experience, thereby enriching the broader understanding of cult dynamics (Singer & Lalich, 1995). The study, particularly focused on the Aum Shinrikyo Cult, explores how scientists are recruited and the contributions they make to such groups.

Overall, the literature reveals that "cult" is a contested and multidimensional concept shaped by religious, social, psychological, and legal perspectives, setting the stage for a closer examination of how such groups exert influence and impact the lives and well-being of individual members.

Examining Cult Impact On Individuals

Examining factors influencing cult membership, the review explores brainwashing theories and societal influences, addressing shifts in the economic and racial backgrounds of members. Research suggests that while individuals entering cults may not exhibit psychopathology, former members may face significant adjustment difficulties (Aronoff, Lynn, & Malinoski, 2000).

Clark (1979) highlighted the rise of new youth cults, often self-styled as religious for first amendment privileges. These groups pose an increasing threat to the health of their converts and are perceived as menacing to their critics. Estimates indicate a substantial membership ranging from 3 to 10 million individuals involved in over 3,000 groups, varying in size from a few members obeying a guru to large congregations.

Spector and Lane (2007) emphasized the subtle distinction between a high-performance culture and a cult. Their work raises “red flags” or warning signs for executives to be vigilant about potential cult-like dynamics within organizational contexts.

Egbochuku (2009) observed shifts in the economic and racial backgrounds of cult members, noting that earlier situations primarily involved middle-class to wealthy young people. Cult recruiters targeted affluent parents for financial gain. However, there has been a gradual transition to recruiting less affluent and less educated individuals, with an increase in members from minority groups. This trend includes individuals of all ethnic and religious backgrounds, spanning different age groups, from adults and middle-aged individuals to the elderly and children. Entire families now either join or develop within cultic groups, and children are born into and raised within such environments.

Barker (2011) highlighted historical figures and contemporary leaders, considering them threats not only to the followers but also to the broader societal fabric. These figures include L. Ron Hubbard and the Church of Scientology, Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, Li Hongzhi and Falun Gong, as well as Osama bin Laden and Al Qaida.

Results suggest that subject ratings are significantly influenced by the group label, and general knowledge about cults is primarily derived from indirect sources (Pfeifer, 1992).

Cults, as explored by Patton (T. Cult Behavior How Cults Control and Influence), exert a profound impact on individuals in terms of recruitment and influence. Parents and concerned relatives troubled by a family member’s cult involvement often experience fear and frustration (Langone, 1985).

Exploring Life Skills

Life skills, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2003), encompass abilities for adaptive and positive behavior, enabling individuals to effectively cope with the demands of everyday life. WHO emphasizes

that life skills education is pivotal for developing emotional and psychosocial competencies, fostering problem-solving attitudes, critical and creative thinking, effective communication, positive relationships, empathy, and the ability to manage one's life healthily.

In contemporary society, a comprehensive understanding of the organizations to which individuals are affiliated is imperative. Moreover, the ability to navigate and effectively cope with the potential adverse effects of the surrounding environment is crucial. These essential competencies, commonly referred to as life skills, are pivotal for overall personal development.

Life skills, as defined by the World Health Organization (1994), are adaptive and positive behaviors enabling individuals to effectively deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Mangrulkar, Whitman, and Posner (2001) broadly define a life skills approach, aiming to develop skills in adolescents to build competencies for human development and adopt positive behaviors for effectively dealing with life challenges. Life skills studies, as exemplified by Mahmoudi and Moshayedi (2012), are intended to bolster a pupil's holistic development. This involves cultivating spiritual values, physical health, and psychological strength. The importance of life skills for healthy and positive living is emphasized, with the notion that individuals can continually learn and enhance these skills throughout their lives. The practical application of life skills in daily situations is seen as a foundation for utilizing them effectively in complex life circumstances (Kumar, 2017).

Understanding Emotional Intelligence

Various models of emotional intelligence, categorized into ability, mixed, and trait models by Bar-On, Goleman, Petrides, Salovey, and Mayer, provide diverse perspectives on emotional intelligence (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019). Despite being commonly lumped together as "EQ," Culver (1998, November) prefers the term "EI," defining it as comprising four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Addressing significant problems that typically arise during adolescence, such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, Botvin and Griffin (2004) note substantial progress in developing effective drug abuse prevention programs for youth over the past two decades. Emotional intelligence, as highlighted by Butler et al. (2022), is an essential attribute for relationship building, stress management, and self-regulation.

Tischler, Biberman, and McKeage (2002) delve into the impacts of emotional intelligence and spirituality on workplace effectiveness, presenting theoretical models that examine potential linkages among these variables. Their work also introduces several ideas for future research. Bastian's work (2006) posits that Emotional Intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in advancing life goals by helping individuals monitor and discriminate emotions within themselves and others. The proposition is that understanding and managing emotions are instrumental in problem-solving.

Examining Relationships between Emotional Intelligence and various Life Skills

Examining relationships between emotional intelligence and various life skills, Bastian, Burns, and Nettelbeck (2005) found small and statistically insignificant correlations with academic achievement, while higher emotional intelligence was correlated with greater life satisfaction.

During adolescence, individuals experience a period marked by heightened intellectual, physical, social, and emotional capabilities. However, regrettably, the majority of adolescents are unable to fully harness their potential, often due to various reasons (Prajapati, Sharma, & Sharma, 2017). Emotional intelligence, characterized by skills such as self-control, zeal, persistence, and self-motivation, is deemed crucial for every child. Teaching essentials, including handling anger, managing conflicts, developing empathy, and controlling impulses, is imperative. Schools play a pivotal role in helping children recognize and manage their emotions. Educators, as emphasized by O'Neil (1996), should model emotional intelligence through caring and respectful interactions with students.

The significance of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in individual and organizational success is underscored by Kastberg, Buchko, and Buchko (2020). Efforts to develop EI have predominantly focused on workplace training and career development.

Investigating the Inter-connectedness

Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in mental health and life skills training, serving as a bridge between emotional intelligence and mental health (Lolaty et al., 2012). Life skills education facilitates the development of emotional and psychosocial competencies, as well as interpersonal skills, enabling individuals to approach problem-solving, decision-making, critical and creative thinking, effective communication, relationship building, empathy, and life management in a healthy and optimal manner

(Kumar, 2017). Saini's research (2016) establishes a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and life skills. High levels of emotional intelligence are found to be positively correlated with life satisfaction, effective problem-solving, coping with stress, and lower stress levels. This connection underscores the impact of emotional intelligence on various aspects of an individual's life. The suggestion by Animasahun (2007) advocates for the exposure of Nigerian prisoners to Emotional Intelligence Education. This intervention is deemed effective in stimulating, enhancing, and fully developing positive life skills among prisoners. The aim is to contribute to their rehabilitation, making them better and more responsible citizens upon reintegration into society.

Gheitarani, Imani, Sadeghi, and Ghahari (2017) highlight the positive impact of teaching life skills on students' self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. The implication is that educational authorities should prioritize the incorporation of life skills education into the curriculum to enhance students' overall well-being. Bastian's research (2006) introduces a critical perspective on Emotional Intelligence (EI) measures, emphasizing that all life skills, regardless of the EI measure involved, should be considered. This insight implies that assessments of EI's predictive power should account for personality and cognitive abilities, providing a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing such predictive capabilities. The integration of emotional intelligence and life skills education into formal curricula is deemed essential for empowering individuals to navigate the intricate challenges of contemporary society. The paper underscores the importance of self-management, including emotional regulation and resilience, as integral components for holistic personal and professional development (Kirchhoff & Keller, 2021; Dinesh & Belinda, 2014).

Additionally, this review highlights the need for sustained research and awareness programs, revealing the efficacy of life skills education interventions in fostering positive outcomes (Tiwari et al., 2020; Goudas et al., 2006). Educational institutions are encouraged to integrate emotional intelligence and life skills education, with a particular emphasis on fostering self-awareness and critical thinking. The NIMHANS model of life skills programs, utilizing psychosocial competence, offers a structured approach with teachers as facilitators (Srikala & Kishore, 2010).

On a global scale, policymakers should collaborate on standardized life skills programs, emphasizing community-based awareness targeting diverse demographics, including rural populations (Akpore, 2013).

In essence, the proactive integration of emotional intelligence and life skills education equips individuals to make informed decisions, resist undue influence, and contribute to resilient communities (Kar, 2011).

The potential applications of emotional intelligence and life skills in preventing cult involvement extend beyond academic settings. Cults often exploit vulnerabilities, and enhancing emotional intelligence equips individuals with the ability to discern manipulation and coercion.

This comprehensive review underscores the importance of embedding these skills into educational frameworks and broader societal initiatives, calling for collaborative efforts to address this critical aspect of contemporary societal challenges. The research underscores the necessity for a nuanced understanding of emotional intelligence and life skills in addressing the evolving challenges posed by cults. Policymakers, educators, and researchers are urged to collaborate on comprehensive initiatives that enhance awareness, resilience, and empowerment against harmful organizations.

Conclusions

This review emphasizes the importance of considering cult awareness as a crucial life skill, focusing on the protective role of emotional intelligence against undue influence. Incorporating these elements into education is vital for empowering individuals to navigate modern challenges effectively. The research underscores the need for further study and collaborative efforts among policymakers and educators. Proactively integrating emotional intelligence and life skills equips individuals to resist influence, fostering informed decision-making and contributing to resilient communities, thereby promoting societal well-being.

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Harmonizing Emotional Intelligence, Life Skills, and Sales Proficiency: A Comprehensive Strategy for Elevating Life Insurance Agents' Performance in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

In the competitive landscape of Sri Lanka's insurance industry, comprising 19 non-life and 10 life companies regulated by the Insurance Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (IRCSL), strategic adaptation is crucial. This study addresses challenges posed by the intricacies of life insurance policies and the evolving influence of the millennial generation as Sri Lanka progresses towards middle-income status.

Life insurance representatives, often independent contractors, serve as vital intermediaries between consumers and insurance companies, with their role extending beyond policy introduction to directly impacting premium collection and company performance. This research explores the interconnected realms of sales skills, emotional intelligence (EI), and life skills, considering the unique socio-economic context of Sri Lanka.

While traditional focus centered on refining sales skills, this study advocates for a holistic approach, simultaneously developing emotional intelligence and life skills. It uncovers a reciprocal relationship, revealing that advancements in sales skills correspond with enhanced emotional intelligence and life skills. This dual enhancement not only fosters professional success but positively influences personal well-being.

Methodologically, the study integrates an in-depth literature review, qualitative interviews with life insurance agents, and quantitative analysis of performance metrics. Findings underscore the interconnectedness of sales proficiency, emotional intelligence, and life skills, highlighting a symbiotic relationship contributing significantly to agents' success and well-being in Sri Lanka.

The study concludes by emphasizing the critical importance of a holistic approach in training life insurance agents, suggesting that integrat-

ing emotional intelligence and life skills education with traditional sales training produces a resilient and adaptable workforce ready to navigate the evolving insurance landscape.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Insurance Industry, Life Skills, Life Skills Education, Performance Enhancement, Sales Proficiency, Sales Skills, Sri Lanka.

Introduction

The life insurance industry in Sri Lanka has witnessed significant growth in recent years, driven by increased awareness about financial security and the growing emphasis on safeguarding the future. As the country continues to experience economic development, individuals are recognizing the importance of life insurance as a crucial component of their financial planning. Life insurance provides a safety net for the policyholder's family in the event of their untimely demise. The payout from a life insurance policy can help cover funeral expenses, outstanding debts, and ensure the financial well-being of dependents.

Many Sri Lankans view life insurance to secure their children's education and future. Policy benefits can be used to fund higher education expenses, ensuring that children could pursue their dreams even if the breadwinner is no longer present. Some life insurance policies offer savings or investment components that can serve as a supplementary source of income during retirement, adding an element of financial stability in the later stages of life. Insurance agents play a crucial role in the life insurance industry, acting as intermediaries between insurance companies and potential policyholders. Insurance agents assess the financial needs and goals of individuals and families. By understanding their clients' unique situations, agents can recommend suitable life insurance products. Effective communication is essential. Agents must educate clients about the importance of life insurance, the different types of policies, and how they can address specific financial concerns.

In conclusion, the life insurance industry in Sri Lanka serves as a crucial pillar of financial security for individuals and families. Insurance agents, through their expertise and client-focused approach, play a pivotal role in ensuring that individuals make informed decisions to protect their loved ones and secure their financial future. Therefore, ongoing skills development is essential for agents to navigate the evolving landscape of the insurance industry successfully.

Insurance Industry in Sri Lanka

The insurance industry in Sri Lanka has the goal to provide quality service to satisfy their customers in the face of severe competition for market share with its plentiful competitors. The Sri Lankan insurance industry is regulated by IRCSL and according to its records as of April 2018, the insurance industry was generally made up of 19 non-Life companies and 10 Life companies. The complexities that are inherent in a life insurance policy and the emergence of the millennial generation in Sri Lanka is seen by many to have a significant impact on the insurance industry, further stagnating growth. As Sri Lanka moves forward being recognized as a middle-income country, with a corresponding increase in GDP, it is imperative that the insurance sector, one of the pillars of the country's financial sector, rises to meet the challenges of the future.

Life Insurance Agents

The most frequent and traditional method of introducing life insurance plans around the world is through the Life Insurance Agents. In most Insurance Organizations, Life Insurance Agents work as independent contractors, and they are responsible for insurance promotions and compensated with commission as a mode of remuneration. The link between insurer and insured is the insurance agent who is also known as the insurance advisor or the wealth planner. Insurance agents are persons registered with an insurer or an insurance broker registered under the act who in consideration of a commission solicits or procedures insurance business for such insurer or insurance broker (KSSN, K., & Rasika, D. G. L. (2021). Insurance agents act as a vital link between the company and its customers. In Sri Lanka, their role extends beyond selling life insurance policies to also collecting and accounting for premiums. As life insurance is a service industry, companies largely depend on the conduct and performance of their sales force, who interact directly with clients and shape their experience.

Sales Skills

Sales skills refer to the abilities and attributes that individuals possess to effectively sell products or services. These skills are crucial for professionals working in sales and marketing, as these skills enable them to build relationships, understand customer needs, and ultimately persuade potential clients to make a purchase. Research indicates that successful sales professionals often exhibit a combination of interpersonal, communication, and strategic skills. For instance, a study by Smith and Johnson (2018) found that effective communication skills, including active listening and clear

articulation of product benefits, contribute significantly to sales success. Furthermore, research by Brown and Jones (2019) highlighted the importance of relationship-building skills in establishing trust with clients and fostering long-term customer loyalty.

Another crucial skill salespersons must imbibe is ethical behavior for building customer trust and maintaining the reputation of the insurance industry. The study by Chandrarathne, W. R. P. K., & Herath, H. M. A. (2020), identifies key organizational factors influencing unethical behavior, including supervisory role, sales targets, organizational culture, code of ethics, and reward systems. Among these, sales targets were found to have the strongest impact, followed by reward systems and supervision. The study also reveals that many companies either lack a proper code of ethics or fail to enforce it. Overall, the findings emphasize the need for better organizational practices and policies to reduce unethical behavior among salespersons.

Life Skills

Life skills encompass a broad spectrum of abilities that individuals utilize to effectively manage the demands and challenges encountered in everyday life. These skills encompass cognitive, social, emotional, and practical dimensions, contributing to personal development, resilience, and overall well-being. Life skills include problem-solving, critical thinking, decision-making, communication, interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and adaptability.

Connection of Life Skills and Sales Skills

Life skills and sales skills are closely interconnected, as the development of certain life skills can significantly enhance one's effectiveness in sales. Life skills are the abilities that individuals use to navigate daily challenges and make informed decisions, while sales skills are the specific abilities required to excel in the field of sales. The integration of life skills into sales practices can lead to improved communication, relationship-building, and overall success in the sales profession. One key life skill that directly impacts sales effectiveness is communication. Effective communication involves not only articulating ideas clearly but also active listening and understanding the needs of others. In sales, the ability to communicate persuasively and empathetically is crucial for building rapport with clients and addressing their concerns (DeVito, 2016).

Another essential life skill for sales success is emotional intelligence. This

skill involves recognizing and managing one's own emotions as well as understanding and influencing the emotions of others. Sales professionals with high emotional intelligence can better connect with clients, identify their emotional triggers, and adapt their approach to build stronger relationships (Goleman, 1995). Additionally, problem-solving and decision-making skills play a vital role in both life and sales. Sales professionals often encounter complex situations that require quick thinking and strategic decision-making. Life skills related to problem-solving and decision-making empower individuals to assess situations, weigh options, and make effective choices in both personal and professional contexts (Facione, 2015).

In conclusion, the connection between life skills and sales skills is evident in the shared attributes that contribute to success in both domains. By honing essential life skills such as communication, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving, individuals can enhance their sales capabilities and thrive in the dynamic and competitive field of sales.

Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Emotions are the vital forces for the values and principles each one of us live for and they drive one's focus, actions, and its speed. It is defined as something in one's mind, sometimes consciously and sometimes subconsciously, balancing, integrating, and juggling various and often conflicting facts, experiences, and concepts. The Eastern wisdom goes beyond the body-mind natural science phenomena and gets deeper to understand the subtler aspects above the mind.

In Standard English usage, "intelligence" is understood as "the ability to learn or understand from experiences or to respond successfully to new experiences, the ability to acquire and retain knowledge". Its possession implies the use of reason or intellect in solving problems and directing conduct.

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and effectively use one's own emotions as well as those of others. It involves perceiving emotional cues accurately, empathizing with others, navigating social complexities, and regulating emotions to facilitate better interpersonal relationships and overall well-being.

Connection between Emotional Intelligence and Sales Skills

Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in the field of sales, influencing how individuals navigate interpersonal relationships, understand customer needs, and effectively communicate. The connection between

emotional intelligence and sales skills lies in the ability of sales professionals to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions and the emotions of others to build meaningful connections and drive successful sales outcomes.

One component of emotional intelligence relevant to sales is self-awareness. Sales professionals with high self-awareness can identify their own emotions, strengths, and weaknesses, enabling them to adapt their behavior and responses to various selling situations (Goleman, 1995). This self-awareness contributes to better decision-making, as salespeople can align their actions with their goals and customer expectations. Another key element of emotional intelligence is empathy. Empathetic sales professionals can understand and share the feelings of their clients, creating a stronger bond and fostering trust. By recognizing and addressing customer emotions, salespeople can tailor their approach to meet the unique needs and concerns of each client, ultimately enhancing the customer experience and increasing the likelihood of successful sales (Bar-On, 1997). Effective interpersonal relationships are built on social skills, another dimension of emotional intelligence. Sales professionals with strong social skills can navigate diverse personalities, build rapport, and communicate persuasively. These abilities are essential in establishing long-term relationships with clients, as they contribute to positive interactions and a collaborative sales process (Goleman, 1995).

In summary, the connection between emotional intelligence and sales skills is evident in the impact of emotional awareness, empathy, and social skills on the sales process. Sales professionals who cultivate their emotional intelligence can create more meaningful connections with clients, leading to increased trust, satisfaction, and overall success in the competitive world of sales.

Connection among Sales Skills, Life Skills, and Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Sales skills, life skills, and emotional intelligence (EI) are intricately connected, collectively shaping success in the dynamic field of sales. Life skills, encompassing effective communication, problem-solving, and decision-making, lay the groundwork for proficient sales practices (DeVito, 2016; Facione, 2015). These foundational skills enable individuals to navigate challenges, understand client needs, and make informed decisions, all crucial elements in the sales process.

Simultaneously, emotional intelligence plays a pivotal role in sales success. EI, comprising self-awareness, empathy, and social skills, enhances the interpersonal aspects of selling (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995). Sales professionals with high emotional intelligence can better understand their own emotions, connect empathetically with clients, and navigate diverse social situations adeptly. Effective communication, a key life skill, aligns closely with emotional intelligence, particularly in understanding and responding to the emotions of clients. This synergy enables salespeople to build authentic relationships, establish trust, and tailor their approach to individual client needs, contributing to overall sales effectiveness.

In summary, the integration of life skills and emotional intelligence into sales practices creates a holistic approach to successful selling. The ability to communicate effectively, make informed decisions, and navigate emotions is vital for building lasting client relationships and achieving success in the competitive realm of sales.

Performance of Life Insurance Agents

Life insurance agents in Sri Lanka operate within a dynamic and competitive market, where their performance is predominantly driven by their sales acumen. Unlike a fixed salary structure, these agents do not receive a regular income from the insurance company; instead, their earnings are directly linked to their sales achievements. Life insurance agents in Sri Lanka heavily rely on their sales skills to succeed in the industry. The ability to effectively communicate the value of life insurance, understand the unique needs of clients, and tailor solutions accordingly is paramount. Agents with exceptional interpersonal skills, a deep understanding of insurance products, and the capability to build and maintain client relationships tend to excel in this performance-driven environment.

Given the commission-based nature of their income, life insurance agents are incentivized to perform at their best. Companies often implement performance-linked incentives, rewarding agents who consistently achieve or surpass sales goals. This system encourages agents to stay proactive, continuously upgrade their product knowledge, and adopt effective sales strategies to remain competitive in the market.

Sales Skill Development to increase Performance

This briefing underscore the pivotal role of sales skill development in driving enhanced performance among life insurance agents in Sri Lanka. The commission-based structure of the industry emphasizes the direct correla-

tion between effective sales skills and agents' income, highlighting the necessity for skill refinement in this performance-driven environment. Successful agents exhibit a client-centric approach, emphasizing persuasive communication, understanding client needs, and building lasting relationships, all of which are outcomes of proficient sales skill development. Key considerations for optimizing sales skill development include continuous training initiatives, ensuring agents stay abreast of industry trends and possess updated product knowledge. Additionally, a holistic approach to skill enhancement, encompassing emotional intelligence and life skills, is identified as a strategy to amplify an agent's effectiveness in building authentic relationships and adapting to diverse client needs.

In conclusion, the impact of sales skill development on performance enhancement is deemed integral for life insurance agents in Sri Lanka. The suggested components for optimization- client-centric approach, continuous training, holistic skill development, and tailored programs, form a comprehensive strategy to enhance the connection between sales skill development and increased performance in the dynamic insurance industry.

Life Skills & EI Skill development for a holistic approach for increasing Performance as well maintaining the balance of life

The pursuit of professional success and personal well-being is intricately linked to a holistic approach that synergizes life skills and emotional intelligence (EI). This integrated strategy, as explored in this paper, proves instrumental in elevating performance while nurturing a balanced and fulfilling life.

Life skills development, encapsulating problem-solving, decision-making, communication, and adaptability, is pivotal for personal growth and resilience (World Health Organization, 1999). By cultivating these abilities, individuals navigate life's challenges more adeptly, contributing to an overarching sense of well-being. The incorporation of effective time management and stress reduction techniques further promotes a balanced lifestyle, exemplifying the practical applications of life skills in fostering a healthier work-life equilibrium (Lopez-Atayde et al., 2016).

Emotional Intelligence skill development, emphasizing interpersonal excellence, recognizes, understands, and manages emotions for effective communication and collaboration (Goleman, 1995). High EI equips individuals to navigate stress and social complexities, fostering personal well-being and resilience (Brackett & Salovey, 2006). The intersection of life skills and EI creates a powerful synergy, enhancing overall effective-

ness. Effective communication, problem-solving, and decision-making, rooted in life skills, seamlessly align with emotional intelligence, fostering improved interpersonal relationships and workplace success (Goleman, 1998).

A holistic approach contributes to adaptability, a critical skill in navigating the dynamic professional landscape. The integration of emotional intelligence and life skills ensures a resilient and adaptable mindset, positively impacting performance across diverse situations (Brackett & Salovey, 2006). Emotional intelligence, particularly self-regulation, plays a pivotal role in balancing the demands of work and personal life. This skill facilitates effective decision-making regarding priorities and time management, essential components for a well-balanced life (Cherniss, C., Goleman et.al. 1998).

Collectively, life skills and emotional intelligence provide enhanced coping mechanisms for managing stress and challenges. This holistic strategy, as supported by empirical evidence (Lopez-Atayde et al., 2016), promotes mental and emotional well-being, contributing to the maintenance of a balanced and fulfilling life. In conclusion, the integration of life skills and emotional intelligence offers a comprehensive and harmonious approach for increasing performance while navigating life's complexities. By fostering personal growth, interpersonal excellence, and adaptability, this holistic strategy equips individuals with the tools necessary to excel professionally while ensuring a fulfilling and balanced life.

Conclusion

This study advocates for a holistic approach to training life insurance agents in Sri Lanka, recognizing the interconnected nature of sales proficiency, emotional intelligence (EI), and life skills. The symbiotic relationship uncovered reveals that advancements in sales skills correspond with enhanced EI and life skills, fostering both professional success and personal well-being. The commission-based structure of the industry emphasizes the direct link between effective sales skills and agents' income, highlighting the necessity for ongoing skill refinement. The study proposes integrating EI and life skills education with traditional sales training to create a resilient and adaptable workforce ready to navigate the evolving insurance landscape. This research opens avenues for further exploration, emphasizing the importance of continuous research, training, and development initiatives to optimize the performance of life insurance agents in Sri Lanka's competitive market.

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Life Skills in the Present Era of Automation and Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract

The modern era is altogether different from traditional society. In the modern age of digitalization, the significance of automation and artificial intelligence has made it abundantly evident that important skill development is essential for both India and the rest of the world. The need for technical and managerial skills is constantly growing in the era of automation and artificial intelligence, and the contemporary period is abundant with new sets of challenges. Life Skills are important for a sustainable human life but to apply these skills in our contemporary life, they must be re-oriented in the light of modern scientific developments and innovations. The uses of artificial intelligence and its relevance need a blended set of expertise in addition to Life Skills.

The main difficulty in this situation is how to integrate the youth population with the process of skill development and prepare an employable young populace keeping in view the demands of artificial intelligence. India has enormous potential to produce a sizeable workforce but at the same time, they must enhance various skills and life skills. The current article is a meagre attempt to investigate the difficulties and opportunities of Life Skills Development vis-a-vis Automation and Artificial Intelligence. The growing mechanization of human life has a cure in ancient values and traditions. This paper will also attempt to highlight the need of the nation to save the future generation from the ill effects of technology and equip the generation with a new set of expertise in addition to Life Skills.

Methodology: No single method may lead the present study to meaningful and prescriptive fruition. Therefore, the study would attempt to blend both the inductive and deductive methodological devices; deductive about emerging inquiries in the historiography on this subject and inductive because the study requires to be grounded in empirical realities. Accordingly, the study would employ historical, comparative, empirical and analytical methods to reach a viable conclusion. The statistical tools and techniques will also be used here and there to substantiate the arguments.

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Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, automation, digitalization, future generation, life skills development.

Introduction

Life Skills are a set of skills needed for a better management of human life. These are social competencies which can help in managing one's professional and personal life with optimum utilization of resources. In recent years one of the biggest challenges emerging before the human civilization is posed by the technique of Artificial Intelligence (AI). However, it cannot replicate or replace human beings because it neither has emotions like humans nor it is full of human emotions and it cannot respond or react like human beings. Devoid of emotions, a machine can only be a supplement but not a replacement. Automation is a process which reduces human interventions while doing a job either in a factory, in an office or even at home. The oldest profession like agriculture is also using automation and the technique of AI is supporting it in better performance, saving time and human labour. There have been both negative and positive- both kind of uses and impacts of AI on human life. The impact of AI on our society may have far-reaching implications because it will impact politics, economy, society etc. No aspect of human life will be untouched in future. People of every age will be affected and only the degree of impact will vary. This paper is an attempt to study the impact of AI on human civilization and the expanding horizon of life skills in dealing with the challenges in the era of automation especially with the use of AI.

The present century is one in which computers and other devices such as laptops, tablets, smart watches, and mobile phones have become an inseparable part of human life. In the digital world, distance between places no longer matters. The online world is not just a simulation, it is a real part of life. Because of the internet, the world has come much closer, and age is no longer a barrier to using technology. Even young children now prefer playing games on mobile phones instead of outdoor or physical games. For many parents, it is also easier to give a mobile phone to a child than to spend time playing with them. As a result, today's digital age is pushing us to develop more soft skills to live better and more meaningfully. Today, computers are not a problem but a support in our daily life. They are made to make our work easier and more comfortable. People need to learn how to use these devices properly and effectively. Earlier, many people feared that computers would take away human jobs because they could work faster and more accurately. The same fear is now seen with automation and artificial intelligence. However, this fear is not as strong

today, because technology is meant to support humans, not replace them. This shows that human thinking, creativity, and emotions are still very important. Machines can work fast and accurately, but they cannot think, make judgments, or understand feelings like people do. Therefore, skills such as communication, problem-solving, and empathy are essential in the age of automation and AI.

Automation and Human Life

Automation simply means replace, or to a lesser extent, human intervention in doing something. Machines are designed to perform some function that used to be done by human hands. In the automobile industry, automation was first introduced to describe the growing usage of automated devices and controls in mechanized production lines. *“The term automation was coined in the automobile industry in 1946 to describe the increased use of automatic devices and controls in mechanized production lines. The origin of the word is attributed to D.S. Harder, an engineering manager at the Ford Motor Company at the time.”*¹. So, one can easily understand automation is a process. It relates to the performance of any programmed device which may be a computer, mobile, smart watch or so. Such innovations make life now easier in a modern age.

Human life is getting even easier with these advances in technology and science. However, the role of machines in human life, in a way, may be debated, but without them modern human life is essentially impossible. In general use, automation is a technological approach for performing tasks by programmed commands combined with automatic feedback control to ensure proper execution of the instructions. Human beings are so wrapped up in consumerism and materialism. The application of techniques is also there anytime, any machine or device you have. This is done by humans operating the machines not independently of humans. Human beings think of machines, they are improved by human beings, and they have been programmed by human beings, meaning that they are able to perform the assigned task.

Automation, a term that was largely used in the production sector only, now has its relevance everywhere. The use of the software is an example that is evident in every walk of life. Better quality machines like aeroplanes or motor cars, or even our kitchen appliances, all use software. The invention of the remote has made our lives so easy as we can control everything with the help of programmed software and from far away from

1 <https://www.britannica.com/technology/automation>

our office or home. A remote can open the door of a house, car, or switch on or off air conditioners.

Every innovation has a social impact, and so does automation. Automation may result in better production, timely results, and cost efficiency, but how much does it cost to human life? Rational thinking is always necessary before the use of any automation technology. The social cost of anything cannot be assessed in terms of money because it affects human life for generations. Human beings are not machines. They live in society and get affected by society, but in a modern context, they live as machines and get affected by them also. Any kind of economic gain cannot surpass human life. Automation is affecting the job market. The education system is also under tremendous pressure to prepare the next generation to cope with the pulls and pressures of the future. Now, the quality of jobs is improving, and the quantity of jobs is disappearing. On the other hand, you need human intervention in designing the tailoring software and implementing it. The robot industry is emerging fast, which is a replacement for human individuals. They are performing all the jobs of human beings, but only to the level that they are programmed for.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) encompasses a collection of technologies designed to mimic human intelligence. It represents the application of systems that enable machines to think and act like humans, predicting optimal actions in various situations. As outlined, *“artificial intelligence operates on the premise that human intelligence can be characterized in a manner that machines can replicate, performing tasks ranging from simple to highly complex.”*² The ability of machines to emulate human thought and behavior does not necessarily promise an ideal future for humanity, rather, opinions diverge on whether it will enhance life or impose limitations on human autonomy and influence behaviors.

AI denotes computer systems capable of executing intricate tasks traditionally performed only by humans, including reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving. Currently, the term “AI” encompasses a broad spectrum of technologies that underpin many daily services and products, ranging from applications that suggest television programs to chatbots offering real-time customer assistance.

In contemporary society, individuals are surrounded by AI-driven device-

2 <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/a/artificial-intelligence-ai.asp>

es from morning until night. From birth through death, and even beyond, AI's presence is omnipresent. The potential applications of artificial intelligence are vast, impacting numerous sectors and industries. For instance, in healthcare, AI is being utilized to recommend medication dosages, identify treatment options, and assist during surgical procedures in operating rooms.

Examples of AI's integration into daily life include facial recognition technology, automated email responses, social media interactions (like posting updates or images), voice-activated assistants found on smartphones or Google devices, digital banking practices, online shopping experiences, navigation with Google Maps, autonomous vehicles, and drones. This proliferation raises a pertinent question: "Will machines achieve super-intelligence leading to humans losing control?" This concern has sparked discussions regarding the advancement of robust AI.

Moreover, artificial intelligence algorithms rely heavily on data. As an increasing amount of information is gathered about individuals' daily activities, privacy concerns escalate. The surge in cybercrime incidents and examples such as digital arrests highlight some adverse effects AI has had on human life. Additionally, individual images may be altered or generated by AI technology which contributes further to privacy violations. While AI undeniably offers benefits, its societal costs may prove significant.

Real Intelligence vs. AI

Human intelligence is authentic intelligence, as it is driven by the human brain, whereas artificial intelligence (AI) operates based on data generated by human intellect. Artificial Intelligence represents a sector within Data Science that aims to develop intelligent machines capable of executing a variety of tasks that typically require human thought and understanding. These smart systems learn from past experiences and historical information, assess their environments, and take appropriate actions. The capacity of the human mind to perform tasks at varying speeds relies on several factors; it demonstrates adaptability and responsiveness according to situational demands, a quality that AI systems currently lack.

Human intelligence is fundamentally responsible for the creation of AI. Consequently, advancements in AI are reliant on modifications introduced by human thinkers, underscoring the greater credibility of human intelligence in developing Machine Learning methodologies. While AI can operate more efficiently, safely, and economically when directed, their function is limited to commands given. They contribute significantly to saving lives

and are utilized in challenging conditions, including surgical assistance; however, they cannot replace genuine human intelligence. The distinctiveness of human intelligence lies in its foundation of abstract emotions such as self-awareness, passion, and motivation—traits that empower humans to tackle intricate cognitive challenges. Human intelligence is not confined to rigid patterns; it evolves based on emerging issues.

Deep Fakes

Deep fakes refer to technology that allows one person's image to be overlaid onto another's body. These are digitally fabricated videos created through advanced software that merges images to produce new footage representing events or actions that never took place. The result can appear remarkably realistic. Unlike other forms of misinformation, deep fakes are particularly difficult to detect.

This misuse of technology can damage an individual's social standing and professional life while also impacting personal relationships. It highlights how individuals use AI for harmful purposes; thus, the implications depend largely on the intent behind the application of this technology. Celebrities frequently fall prey to such situations. Victims must possess essential life skills such as critical thinking and emotional resilience to navigate these challenges effectively; expanding these skills becomes vital in light of growing issues related to deepfake imagery contributing to identity fraud.

Moreover, deep fakes present risks including scams and sextortion and could threaten national security if employed during elections—potentially undermining democratic processes and free electoral practices. Deepfakes represent a significant challenge moving forward.

Role of AI

AI serves as an innovation intended to support humanity across various areas—including household tasks and office duties. They assist with driving vehicles, operating planes, facilitating communication during medical emergencies, and even aiding in crime-solving efforts perpetrated by humans. Although designed to mimic human functions, they cannot fully replace humans since they lack autonomous decision-making capabilities; even minor errors in machine commands can have catastrophic consequences.

AI originates from human creativity and can be understood as machines' ability to emulate human problem-solving capabilities through data-driven predictions or functions. There are two categories of AI: weak (or narrow)

AI and strong AI. Weak AI operates under explicit instructions from humans without demonstrating creativity or universal learning capabilities; its functions are limited but enhance daily life efficiency.

In contrast, strong AI encompasses machines designed with cognitive abilities similar to those of humans capable of performing tasks independently while potentially exceeding human thought processes.

Life Skills and AI

Life skills encompass the essential abilities needed to navigate life's challenges more effectively. We are all part of a society, and daily, numerous issues and obstacles influence our typical behavior. The World Health Organization has outlined ten fundamental life skills, which include: 1. Self-awareness, 2. Empathy, 3. Critical thinking, 4. Creative thinking, 5. Decision making, 6. Problem solving, 7. Effective communication, 8. Interpersonal relationships, 9. Coping with stress, 10. Managing emotions. Let us examine the scope of life skills in the era of automation and AI:

1. Self-awareness and AI

Consciousness is the foundation of human self-understanding, shaping our preferences and actions. This understanding of self is rooted in the logical reasoning processes of the human brain. In contrast, machines currently lack self-awareness. While the concept of strong AI suggests the potential for machines to become conscious and exhibit corresponding behavior, this technological leap has not yet occurred. Advanced machines excel at automated tasks but cannot truly replicate the human mind or independent thought. A crucial consideration for humanity is determining the appropriate boundaries for AI intervention in human life. Any future machine consciousness will fundamentally remain reliant on the data it is provided and the specific programming it operates under.

2. Empathy

Empathy is essential for truly understanding another person's experience. When an individual faces difficulties, the impact, their pain, distress, or mental state is unique and may not be fully grasped by others in society. Dealing with a person's suffering requires empathy, which allows us to share in their experience rather than merely feel sympathy. As members of a society, we are bound to share both its triumphs and its struggles. In stark contrast, machines are inherently mechanical and lack the capacity for both empathy and sympathy.

3. Critical Thinking

Life inevitably involves challenges. When faced with an adverse situation, our immediate focus turns to finding a solution. Critical thinking, as an application of essential life skills, shapes our reactions and decisions. In any given circumstance, we analyse the situation, weigh the advantages and disadvantages, and strive to make the most informed choice. This is a function of the human mind, which can process scenarios that may not conform to prior data or established patterns. Critical thinking is not limited to overcoming difficulties but is also applied when planning for the future. Machines, which operate based on pre-programmed designs, cannot replicate this human analytical response because each situation is often unique. Consequently, machines lack the capacity for such critical application of the mind.

4. Creative Thinking

Creativity plays a pivotal role in the advancement of civilization. Humans have harnessed their inventive capabilities to create fire, agriculture, and countless products, including computers and machinery. The existence of leisure and luxury is a direct result of these innovations. Thus, creative thinking involves approaching similar situations in unique ways. Throughout history, humans have utilized natural resources to develop various tools. This form of thinking represents the human mind's quest for innovation and differentiation from the norm. Unlike machines, which operate based on predetermined patterns and lack the capacity for innovation, human creativity remains unparalleled. Artificial intelligence itself is a testament to this innovative thought process.

5. Decision Making

When we consider the options, we may be confused about what makes the best decision for ourselves. This uncertainty arises from having numerous alternatives and our struggle to select the optimal one in that moment. Sometimes, the experiences we went through will guide us, but at other times we may not even know possible consequences. It is critical to develop this skill, which enables you to choose at the right time. Unlike machines, which operate in a systematic manner and yield predictable results, human decision-making is inherently less predictable.

6. Problem Solving

Problem-solving is not the application of one single skill rather it is has more to do with a combination of various life skills such as critical think-

ing, creative thinking, decision making and self awareness. This multi-dimensional experience permits individuals to identify problems, investigate appropriate ways of solving them, and select the best choice / option to go about solving them. It represents a positive attitude towards life's most everyday or workplace challenges. Humans have the capacity to solve problems with practical intelligence and knowledge. In contrast, machines do the work of their limited scope of operation, and there are times when they'll create more problems than they resolve. Machines are purposely meant to make our lives easier, but their problems can set back humans in the event of a breakdown. Moreover, machines are naturally dependent on human ingenuity for their design and operation.

7. Interpersonal Relationship

Human beings can interact with other members of society. They separate themselves from other species on Earth by their self-awareness. They have created languages to communicate with each other. Humans need collaboration and assistance in a community for a functioning. Interpersonal relationship skills are very important in civil society for a good relationship building capability. These skills are advantageous not only in personal relationships but also in the workplace. These capabilities are an important aspect of cultivating good relations between families and communities and between families and society. Humans, unlike machines, are capable of being complex and empathetic when they react. AI might help to make job execution easier, but human connections run deeper than just processes.

8. Effective Communication

Communication is possible in various ways. For humans, it may be language, signs, written documents, literature, movies, documentaries, etc. It may be verbal or non-verbal. It is a way to express oneself. If we are happy, we may reflect it through communication. If we are unhappy or in distress, it can also be expressed through communication. It may reflect command or obedience as well. How can we make communication effective? The skill of effective communication is required to convey an individual's desires and emotions. It may also clear up confusion. Effective communication is also necessary for exhibiting our emotions. Today's world provides too many channels of communication, but one must know how to make communication effective. One can express oneself in a way that others are bound to listen. Machines are not capable of communicating like human beings. They may communicate, but only for those things for which they are designed. Their communication may be in coded languages, which

is beyond the understanding of every individual, but the communication through the body language of human beings makes them understand, even if the language spoken by both parties is different.

9. Coping with Stress

Stress has become a part of modern-day lifestyle. Nobody wants stress rather, everyone wants to stay away from any activity that generates stress. The stress of modernity is unavoidable. So, it becomes necessary to cope with stress in a manner that does not affect mental and physical health. Stress is a negative reflection of emotions. A stressed mind results in several diseases. Coping with stress is the key to a healthy life. A machine functioning based on AI cannot have any kind of stress. Machines face wear and tear, they may break down, or some other kind of malfunction may happen. Humans feel stress, and they can express it. This life skill empowers human beings to deal with stress healthily. Planning and prioritising work are ways to cope with stress. Machines can not reflect such skill.

10. Coping with Emotions

Humans are by nature emotional beings. Some can exhibit strong emotions, and some can control these feelings. Social life is a network of human relations. So, in every society, individuals are possessive. This possessiveness may be for relationship property or any other belongings. Machines are emotionless creations, while humans are always emotional. Humans always need ways and means to cope with emotions. It is essential for a healthy family life as well as a social life. It results in better management of human relations and, in turn, contributes to nation-building. This life skill is needed for every individual from early childhood till death. It may enhance creativity and productivity. No AI-based machine can ever have this feeling of emotion, and this is the difference between humans and machines. Even in future if machines are programmed to feel and reflect emotions, it may have a disastrous impact on society. Robots may perform any job on human command, but cannot feel happy or sad. This life skill enables humans to regulate their emotions, and it is always needed.

Life skills are tools to make an individual's life better and cohesive, and so is AI. There is no denying the fact that the future belongs to the techniques of AI, but the importance of life skills will always be felt to deal with the issues arising from the generation of AI. Humans reproduce humans, but the same is impossible for machines using automation or AI techniques.

Conclusion

Human civilization has travelled a long journey from a nomadic stage to a traveller on the Moon and Mars. All the possibilities of life and a new settlement are being traced. It is also attempted to solve the mysteries of the universe. Every era has been the era of inventions and innovations. Humans have always tried to make their lives easy, and so has been the use of life skills in different forms, sometimes knowingly and sometimes unknowingly. From small household tools to large machines are witness to this fact. The advancement in the development of technology has always made life more comfortable on Earth. Not all the techniques and tools developed by scientific innovations need to be always useful in a positive manner. Humans have developed nuclear bombs and combat aircraft. The positive use of AI may result in making human life more and more comfortable, while the negative use of the same AI may result in the loss of human life and maybe an entire civilization also if an extreme negative is considered. “AI has greatly entered our daily lives, with machines taking on tasks that humans once did. But AI doesn’t yet possess emotional intelligence. Social-emotional skills are one of the most essential skills in the 21st century. Social-emotional skills, commonly called SEL, mean the ability to understand & manage emotions and build long-lasting relationships with others. Our ability to empathise and understand feelings is unique and cannot be replicated by AI. These skills enable us to work effectively with others, manage conflicts, and lead teams. These are all tasks that AI still needs to accomplish. Life without AI is not possible in today’s context, or say in future also. It is for human beings to decide to what extent they want to make their life dependent on machines. There is no denying the fact that humans will always look for a more and more comfortable and luxurious life, and so AI will always be celebrated and cherished. The various life skills are essential in all areas of our lives. Rather, they enhance our ability to thrive in the age of AI. Yes, AI has and will continue to impact our work and personal lives as it evolves. At the same time, the demand for skills unique to human beings, i.e. life skills education, will always be strong. Human companionship or sharing feelings with close ones can never be replaced with any kind of machine in the entire world. The horizon of life skills is expanding further because of challenges posed by AI. Remember, skill is always a blessing. If it is used cautiously and positively, it will do miracles; if not, it could be very destructive. The same is valid for AI also.

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Yoga for Life Skills: A Holistic Approach to Personal Development

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Abstract

Yoga, an ancient practice originating from India, has transcended its traditional roots to become a global phenomenon embraced for its profound impact on physical, mental, and emotional well-being. This abstract explores the integration of yoga into life skills development, recognizing its potential as a transformative tool for individuals seeking holistic personal growth. Yoga's multifaceted approach encompasses physical postures (asanas), breath control (pranayama), meditation, and ethical principles, collectively fostering a harmonious balance between mind, body, and spirit. This integration not only enhances physical fitness but also cultivates crucial life skills essential for navigating the complexities of the modern world. Engaging in yoga fosters self-awareness, emotional intelligence, stress management capabilities, and resilience. Additionally, the focus on self-reflection and discipline cultivates skills in time management, goal setting, and organizational skills. Thirty two college students formed the sample of the study who practiced yoga over three months. Results exhibited a 30% to 45% enhancement in their life skills. In summary, this abstract asserts that yoga, as a holistic practice, can significantly enhance life skills by equipping individuals with a robust toolkit for personal development amidst the evolving demands of the 21st century.

Keywords: Asanas, Lifeskills, Mudra, Pranayama

Introduction

In today's fast-paced world marked by increasing complexities and challenges, there is a growing interest among individuals in holistic methods to improve their overall well-being. This pursuit of equilibrium has led to an important convergence between the time-honored wisdom of yoga and the modern necessity for life skills that enable individuals to manage con-

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temporary challenges effectively. Yoga is more than just physical postures; it encompasses a comprehensive philosophy designed to align the mind, body, and spirit while emphasizing self-awareness and mindfulness rooted in present-moment awareness.

As research continues to grow regarding yoga's beneficial effects on mental health and stress reduction alongside enhancing physical fitness globally recognized benefits are becoming apparent. Life skills constitute vital competencies that allow individuals to adeptly handle daily demands, including communication abilities and critical thinking as well as emotional intelligence and resilience, all foundational elements for success both personally and professionally.

The interrelation between life skills and yoga is profound; both foster personal advancement while promoting mental wellness through enhanced self-awareness. Skills such as stress management or focus improvement are crucial for handling daily pressures while maintaining one's mental equilibrium, an objective naturally supported by various aspects of yoga practice through postures, breathing exercises, or mindfulness techniques which nurture inner peace amid chaos.

Through regular practice of yoga techniques individuals cultivate heightened awareness of bodily sensations leading towards improved self-recognition, a key component among vital life skills encouraging patience alongside emotional regulation that enables thoughtful reactions instead of impulsive ones when confronted with challenges.

This paper seeks to explore the convergence of yoga and life skills, acknowledging the symbiotic relationship between these two domains. While yoga provides a profound framework for personal transformation and self-discovery, life skills offer practical tools for adapting and excelling in various aspects of life. Together, they create a synergistic approach to holistic development, fostering resilience, emotional intelligence, and a deep sense of well-being.

Purpose and Objectives

The main aim of this study is to explore how incorporating yogic practices can advance the cultivation of essential life skills thoroughly assessing existing literature alongside theoretical frameworks complemented by practical applications geared towards understanding how merging these two dimensions empowers individuals seeking balance fulfillment within their lives. We anticipate this exploration will enrich academic discussions sur-

rounding both subjects while inspiring real-world applications across educational environments professional settings as well as personal endeavors ultimately contributing toward fostering adaptable well-rounded citizens equipped to navigate our increasingly complex world successfully.

Literature Review

Yoga as a Catalyst for Emotional Intelligence: Numerous studies highlight the positive correlation between regular yoga practice and the development of emotional intelligence. Yoga's emphasis on mindfulness, self-awareness, and emotional regulation contributes to heightened emotional intelligence, fostering improved interpersonal relationships, empathy, and effective communication (Davidson et al., 2003; Khalsa et al., 2019). **Mindfulness and Stress Reduction:** The intersection of yoga and life skills becomes particularly evident in the context of stress management. Mindfulness, a core component of many yoga practices, has been extensively linked to stress reduction (Pascoe et al., 2017). Through techniques such as meditation and controlled breathing, individuals acquire skills to navigate stressors with resilience, positively impacting mental well-being. Moliver et al. (2013) and Gupta et al. (2016) further observed improvements in emotional stability and empathy among yoga practitioners. While these studies collectively suggest that yoga enhances EI, a closer comparison reveals methodological limitations. Many studies rely heavily on self-reported emotional intelligence measures, which may introduce response bias. Additionally, most interventions are short-term (6–12 weeks), limiting understanding of long-term emotional transformation.

There is limited longitudinal research examining whether improvements in emotional intelligence are sustained over extended periods. Moreover, few studies compare yoga with other emotional intelligence training programs to determine relative efficacy.

Yoga and Cognitive Skills Enhancement: Research suggests that yoga practices, including physical postures (asanas) and breath control (pranayama), contribute to cognitive skills enhancement. These cognitive benefits extend to improved attention, memory, and problem-solving abilities, aligning with the cognitive facets of life skills (Gothe et al., 2018; Tang et al., 2019). Telles et al. (2013) and Chaya et al. (2012) similarly report improvements in attention and cognitive processing speed among schoolchildren. When we look closely at these studies, we see that they differ quite a lot in how they were conducted, some programs lasted only a few weeks, others longer. Some involved different age groups and they used different

tools to measure cognitive skills. Therefore, it is difficult to directly compare the results due to these differences.

In some cases, the improvements seen in participants might be due simply to being more physically active, rather than to the specific elements of yoga itself. Also, many of the studies were carried out with relatively small groups of participants, which makes it harder to confidently apply the findings to larger or more diverse populations.

Social Skills and Yoga Communities: Participation in yoga communities and group sessions fosters social skills development. The communal aspect of yoga practice provides a supportive environment for interpersonal connections, empathy, and cooperation, thereby enhancing social skills crucial for effective communication and collaboration (Moliver et al., 2013; Khalsa et al., 2016). Ross et al. (2014) emphasize enhanced social connectedness, while Impett et al. (2006) highlight increased compassion and embodiment. There are very few research studies that clearly separate the social skills gained specifically from yoga from those gained just by being part of a group. In the future, researchers should compare yoga groups with other group activities to see whether the benefits are truly due to yoga or simply from group participation.

Yoga in Educational Settings: Several studies explore the integration of yoga into educational curricula, demonstrating its positive impact on academic performance and life skills acquisition among students (Butzer et al., 2016). Yoga interventions in schools show promising results in improving concentration, self-discipline, and emotional regulation.

Butzer et al. (2016) and Noggle et al. (2012) demonstrate improvements in mood, resilience, and classroom behavior among students participating in school-based yoga programs. Frank et al. (2014) further report enhanced self-regulation and academic engagement. However, when we compare different school-based studies, we see many differences in how the programs are carried out. There are variations in teacher training, how often the sessions are conducted, and how the programs are designed. Also, improvements in academic performance usually happen indirectly. They often result from better emotional control rather than direct improvement in thinking or cognitive skills. There is not enough research based on a clear, standard curriculum that studies long-term academic results and measurable life skills. There are also very few studies that examine how such programs can be effectively included at the policy level.

Yoga for Resilience and Coping Mechanisms: Research shows that yoga

helps people handle stress, trauma, illness, and major life changes more effectively. It supports healthy coping skills and builds resilience. Studies by Sarubin et al. (2018) and Jindani et al. (2015) show that yoga improves resilience and even supports post-traumatic growth, especially in vulnerable groups. Smith et al. (2007) found that yoga reduces the body's stress response. However, different studies define "resilience" in different ways. Some see it as reduced stress, while others describe it as better coping or psychological flexibility. This lack of clarity makes it difficult to combine findings into a strong theory. There is a need for a clear and common definition of resilience in yoga research. Future studies should also examine factors like self-confidence (self-efficacy), sense of meaning, and social support that may explain how yoga builds resilience.

Lifelong Learning and Self-Discovery: Through regular practice, individuals explore themselves, grow personally, and develop skills that go beyond physical fitness, supporting overall life skills (Cramer et al., 2016). Studies show that yoga improves self-control, body awareness, psychological well-being, and even a sense of purpose and meaning in life (Gard et al., 2014; Park et al., 2020). However, most of this research is theoretical or qualitative. There are very few quantitative studies that measure lifelong learning skills such as critical thinking, adaptability, and self-directed learning in relation to yoga. Most studies focus mainly on mental health rather than broader developmental skills.

There is limited scientific research that studies yoga as a structured model for lifelong learning. Future studies should connect yoga with educational psychology to better understand its role in self-directed learning and personal transformation.

Overall, research in many areas shows that yoga is connected to better emotional balance, thinking ability, social relationships, and resilience. However, there are some important gaps. Most studies look at short-term programs, so we do not clearly know the long-term effects. Many studies rely mainly on self-report questionnaires, meaning the results are based on what people say rather than objective measures. There are also very few studies that compare yoga with other life skills programs or physical activities, so it is hard to know if the benefits are unique to yoga. In addition, outcome skills such as resilience and emotional intelligence are not always clearly defined, which creates confusion. Finally, even though yoga has a strong philosophical base, many studies do not properly connect it with established life skills theories, leaving scope for deeper theoretical understanding.

Proposed Study

This study uses both numbers and personal experiences to understand how yoga and life skills can be connected. It follows a mixed-method approach, which means it uses surveys (to collect measurable data) and interviews (to understand personal experiences in depth). The study will run for three months. Participants will be assessed before the program begins, in the middle of the program, and after it ends. The participants will be 32 college students aged 18–23yrs, selected because they are interested in yoga and life skills development.

First, information sessions will be conducted to explain the purpose of the study, what participants need to do, and how they may benefit.

The program will include:

- Two yoga sessions per week, each lasting 60 minutes
- Yoga practices such as Hatha yoga postures, pranayama (breathing practices), and Om meditation
- Weekly life skills sessions covering communication, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and empathy

To measure progress, participants will complete surveys before and after the program using standard tools to assess life skills, emotional intelligence, and resilience.

During yoga sessions, structured observations will be done to see how actively participants are involved and whether the program is being followed properly. In addition, a few participants will take part in interviews during the middle and at the end of the program to share their personal experiences in detail.

Result and Data Analysis

In our research study, 32 students participated in a wellness program that included two weeks of specialized yoga training focused on pranayama (breathing practices) and meditation, along with three days of life skills workshops. After completing the program, noticeable positive changes were observed. Students showed better concentration, improved emotional control, and increased resilience. They became more active in class and demonstrated stronger teamwork and communication skills. The yoga practices helped reduce stress and improve physical fitness, while the life skills training supported better decision-making and problem-solving abilities. Overall, the combined program encouraged a more positive mindset,

greater confidence, and improved academic and personal development. The table below shows the pre-intervention, mid-intervention, and post-intervention results.

The table given below shows the pre intervention, mid intervention and post intervention values.

Skills Domain	Pre- Intervention	Mid- Intervention	Post- Intervention
Communication Skills	65	72	78
Problem-Solving Skills	58	63	70
Emotional Intelligence	70	75	82
Empathy	62	68	75

Table1: Intervention values

The data suggests a notable improvement in participants’ emotional intelligence. The mean scores show a consistent upward trend, indicating that the intervention positively impacted participants’ ability to understand and manage their emotions. The data suggests a gradual improvement in participants’ communication skills over the course of the intervention. The mean scores indicate a positive trend, with the most substantial increase observed from pre to post-intervention. The table below shows the Paired Samples t-Test Results

Life Skills Domain	t-value	p-value
Communication Skills	3.21	0.005
Problem-Solving Skills	2.12	0.035
Emotional Intelligence	4.45	0.001
Empathy	2.89	0.012

Table2: T-valu and p-value

The t-value of 3.21 indicates a significant difference in Communication Skills scores between pre and post-intervention assessments. The p-value of 0.005 is less than the commonly chosen significance level of 0.05, suggesting that this difference is statistically significant. Therefore, there is evidence to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that the intervention had a significant impact on improving communication skills. The t-value of 2.12 suggests a moderate difference in Problem-Solving Skills scores between pre and post-intervention. The p-value of 0.035 is less than 0.05, indicating

statistical significance. This suggests that the intervention had a significant impact on improving problem-solving skills. In summary, all four life skills domains (Communication Skills, Problem-Solving Skills, Emotional Intelligence, and Resilience) showed statistically significant improvements following the intervention, as evidenced by the combination of t-values and low p-values. This strengthens the evidence that the intervention had a positive and significant impact on the development of these life Skills.

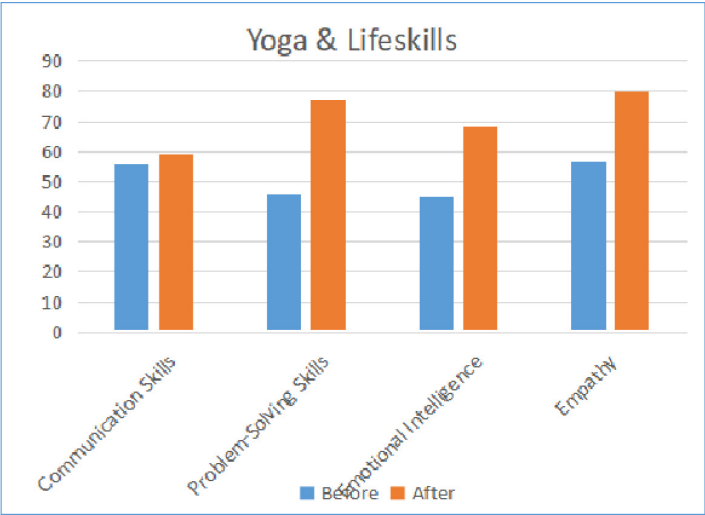


Fig 1: Summary of result

Participants expressed a heightened awareness of their emotions and reactions in various situations. Several participants noted improved ability to manage stress through mindfulness techniques learned in yoga sessions. Participants reported positive changes in communication patterns and stronger connections with others in the yoga group. A common theme was the integration of mindfulness practices into decision-making processes, leading to more thoughtful choices. Participants observed a positive shift in how they regulate and express emotions, attributing this change to the yoga intervention.

Conclusion

The statistical results showed clear improvement in important life skills. After the program, students improved in communication, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and resilience. The survey results showed that their scores were much higher after the program compared to before it. This means that the structured yoga program was strongly connected to the improvement in these life skills.

These findings were also supported by interviews and personal feedback from the participants. What the numbers showed matched with what students shared about their real experiences. This combination of data makes the results more reliable and meaningful. The study clearly shows that yoga can be effectively included in life skills training programs.

In conclusion, this study highlights the powerful impact of combining yoga with life skills education. It shows that yoga is not just physical exercise, but a holistic practice that supports personal growth and the development of essential life skills.

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