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Dr. Pramod D. Post Doctoral Fellow (ICSSR), School of Education, Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod, Kerala	LIFE SKILLS OF SCHOOL-GOING TRIBAL ADOLESCENTS OF THIRUVANANTHAPURAM DISTRICT ABSTRACT <i>The present study yearns to find out the level of life skills of school-going tribal adolescents and to compare the level of life skills of school-going tribal adolescents in terms of gender and nature of school. Survey method was used in this study. A sample of 120 tribal adolescents in Thiruvananthapuram district from 3 schools was chosen. The Malayalam version of the Life Skills Assessment Test for Adolescents (LSAT-A) developed by Dinakar and Suresh (2018) was used to collect the data. The findings indicated that the level of life skills of school-going tribal adolescents is generally low to average; the life skills of male school-going tribal adolescents is higher than those of female school-going tribal adolescents and the tribal adolescents of higher secondary schools had higher levels of life skills than those from secondary schools.</i> Keywords: Life Skills, Tribal Adolescents.
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INTRODUCTION

The term Life skills is coined in the late twentieth century with the initiatives of United Nations based organizations like UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA and WHO. Life Skills are defined by the W.H.O 'as the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior enabling the individual to deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life effectively'. UNICEF (2003) considers 'Life skills Education' as 'a structured programme of needs-and-outcomes-based participatory learning that aims to increase positive and adaptive behaviour by assisting individuals to develop and practice psycho-social skills that minimize risk factors and maximize protective factors.' The Generic or Core Life Skills according to the WHO are Self-awareness, Empathy, Interpersonal Relationship, Effective Communication, Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, Decision Making, Skills to Cope with Emotions and Skills to Cope with Stress.

Life skills is applied in many a contexts these days in domains relating to health, education, personality development and management. The concept of life skills is very much important to the adolescents to build and mould their lives through a transition period from childhood to adulthood, often plagued with issues and problems like identity crisis, role ambiguity, heightened sexual development and interest, substance abuse, emotional turmoil, risk taking behaviour etc. to name a few.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Lots of research studies are conducted across the globe that deal with the empowerment of tribal, native or indigenous populations and also other Socially disadvantaged populations based on Life skills. Studies by Lee and Lee (2019), Bean, Kramers, Forneris and Camiré (2018), Kwauk, et al. (2018), Chiang, Ni and Lee (2017), Keith, et al. (2017), Robinson, et al. (2016), LaFromboise and Howard-Pitney (1995) are few among them. Studies by Joshy

(2017), Prajapati, Sharma and Sharma (2017) and Mercy (2005) are some prominent studies conducted in India based on this Psycho-social construct.

Studies dealing with plight of tribals in Kerala and practical measures to empower them are not that great in number. Yet, there are many studies that have described the status of tribals in a social and educational perspective. Studies, which offer concrete measures to ensure empowerment or those that lead the tribal adolescents to actualize themselves are not many. The present study is a humble attempt to know the level of life skills of tribal adolescents of Thiruvananthapuram district. This study can pave the way for further researches in this direction.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the level of life skills of school-going tribal adolescents.
- To compare the level of life skills of school-going tribal adolescents on the basis of gender and nature of school.
- To suggest practical measures for the effective inculcation of life skills for tribal adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Survey method was conducted on a sample of 120 tribal adolescents in Thiruvananthapuram district from 3 schools where predominantly tribal students were studying. The Malayalam version of the Life Skills Assessment Test for Adolescents (LSAT-A) developed by Dinakar and Suresh (2018) was used for the study. The LSAT-A had 60 hypothetical real life situations that covered all the 10 Life Skills identified by the WHO. The Content Validity was ensured and Concurrent Validity with Life Skills Assessment Scale by Nair, Subhasree and Ranjan (2010) had a value of 0.79. The Split-Half Reliability of the Test was 0.81 and Cronbach Alpha was 0.84. The norms of the test were 'Low' - Scores 42 and below, 'Average' - Scores 43-74 and 'High' - Scores 75 & above.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Level of Life Skills of School-Going Tribal Adolescents

Life Skills			Low		Average		High	
Me an	SD	N	Cou nt	%	Cou nt	%	Cou nt	%
53.33	12.06	120	20	16.67	85	70.83	15	12.50

Table-1 shows that 16.67% of the school-going tribal adolescents had low level, 70.83% had average level and 12.50% had high level of life skills. The mean score of 53.33 falls in the classification of average from the norms of LSAT-A between the 30 percentile and 40 percentile scale scores of the test. The minimum score obtained was 28 and the maximum score was 93. This leads to the interpretation that the level of life skills of school-going tribal adolescents of was generally low to average, more than two-thirds of the school-going tribal adolescents had average levels of life skills and the number of school-going tribal adolescents who had low level of life skills was comparatively higher than those having high level.

Table 2: Comparison of Life Skills of School-Going Tribal Adolescents based on Gender and Nature of School

Variable	Sub-sample	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Gender	Male	69	55.3	11.85	2.1*
	Female	51	50.67	11.95	
Nature of School	Secondary	82	51.46	10.18	2.24*
	Higher Secondary	38	57.37	14.73	

*Significant at .05 level.

Table-2 depicts that the mean scores of male school-going tribal adolescents (55.3) is higher than that of females (50.67) with a significant t-value of 2.1, (t=2.1, p<0.05), and the mean life skills scores of tribal adolescents of higher secondary schools (57.37) is higher than that of secondary schools (51.46) with a significant t-value of 2.24, (t=2.24, p<0.05), it could be interpreted that the life skills of male school-going tribal adolescents was higher than those of female school-going tribal adolescents and the life skills of tribal adolescents of higher secondary schools was higher than those of secondary schools.

The reason that can be attributed to the male school-going tribal adolescents having significantly higher life skills than females is that, in tribal context males have more avenues for social interaction and expression rather than their female counterparts. Similarly, higher secondary school tribal adolescents are more mature in terms of chronological as well as mental ages which give them more opportunities for personal development as well as social skills, which in turn reflects upon their higher levels of life skills.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- Life skills training should be given to tribal adolescents so that their levels of life skills can be enhanced, which would in turn assure their success in lives.
- There is a Gender disparity in the level of life skills and this should be removed by giving more life skills training to girls and also by giving them more opportunities for social interaction.
- Life skills training should be given to the children at an early stage of their lives so that even if they drop out after secondary schools, they would have some minimum levels of skills for success in life.
- An adolescent - socially/culturally disadvantaged or not, will be able to tackle the issues and challenges of adolescence as well as their future lives by becoming individually and socially competent if they are empowered with life skills. so special emphasis must be made by policy-makers to consider that life skills is an important aspect of overall development of personality of an individual and this can help in enriching the Central Governments' scheme of 'Skill India' leading to 'Sresth Bharat'.

SUGGESTIONS

The following are some suggestions that can be employed for the effective inculcation of life skills to tribal adolescents.

- ❖ Life skills training should be an integral part of the school curriculum. It should be provided as part of teaching-learning process of each subject.
- ❖ Educated people from tribal communities, tribal leaders and tribal promoters are to be included in the preparation and development of need-based life skills modules for each area or tribal community.
- ❖ There should be co-ordination among various departments of the state and central governments as well as the local self government institutions to ensure those life skills and other personality development programmes are not hampered by red-tapism or lack of coordination.
- ❖ The services of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Corporate Responsibility Schemes (CSR) of corporates' should also be made use of, for enhancing the life skills of tribal adolescents.

POSTSCRIPT

“Challenges and problems are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life beautiful and worth living.” - Joshua J. Marine

Life skills is a set of psycho-social skills that caters to the development of Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes as well as Individual and Social domains of personality. Tribal adolescents empowered with Life Skills will be able to definitely tackle the challenges of adolescence, their personal lives and social obligations, and emerge successful in their future lives.

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