



## The Effectiveness of Life Skills Training on Achievement Motivation and Life Satisfaction of Students

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**ABSTRACT:** Since a considerable part of students' lives are spent at school, a huge contribution is made by the schools to education and training of the students. The study has sought to assess the effectiveness of Life Skills Training on students' Achievement Motivation and their Life Satisfaction. This experimental project has run pre and post-testing on the Control Group. The sample consisted of 40 sophomore male students who studied in Ardabil high school during the school year 2011-2012, who were selected in a random multi-stage fashion and split into two groups of 20; a Control Group (n=20) and an experimental group (n=20). A questionnaire on Achievement Motivation and a brief multidimensional Life Satisfaction scale was used in order to collect data. The experimental group were given 8 sessions of Life Skills Training during a month. The data was analyzed using Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). As Multivariate Analysis of Variance indicated, Life Skills Training motivated the students towards achievement and progress and increased their Life Satisfaction ( $P < 0.001$ ). The outcome and conclusion of the research has important implications for students regarding education and counseling services.

**Keywords:** Life Skills, Achievement Motivation, Life Satisfaction

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### INTRODUCTION

During this century, technological breakthroughs will reach its zenith, higher than any period in human history, and this development will, in turn, bring about dramatic changes in various aspects of human life. New methods of dealing with existing and emerging issues, adopting to new changes, ways of communicating with others, coping with environmental pressures will, more than ever, be on the agenda during this century. Living under such circumstances demands certain sets of skill to enable us live a healthy, zealous, peaceful, prosperous and efficient life. This demand is mostly because, many individuals fail to efficiently address the hardships of daily life and cope successfully with challenges that every human being might face during a life time. Numerous bodies of research have indicated that many health issues and psycho-emotional disorders are indeed rooted in psycho-social problems. During a lifetime, everyone is challenged and has to cope with difficulties and hassles of life and every individual has their own way of dealing with these issues. Those who successfully get past these challenges are in possession of three skills; Flexibility, Prudence, and Logical Thinking. As a matter of fact, experts hold that it is required that mental health initiatives, including life skills training, be employed in order for the students to be able to assert more control over their lives and maintain their mental health.

Life Skills Training were first introduced in an article 1980-1984 by Botvin and Griffin (2004) which led

to an initiative by the World Health Organization in the year 1993 for preventing the disorders and enhancing the mental health of people. This educational program had 5 sections of Self-awareness-Empathy, Interpersonal Communication Skills, Decision making-Problem Solving, Creative Thinking-Critical Thinking, Coping with Stress and Emotions. Life skills covers an area of cognitive, emotional and practical skills, which could guarantee success and satisfaction in daily life, and the purposes of training these skills are a reflection of the requirements of daily life.

Organizing programs for enhancing students' social and problem-solving skills, will probably boost their performance at school and will ameliorate their mental health. Not being familiar with methods of managing a crisis and inability to cope with stressful situations in life on the part of the juvenile could lead to their failure, rage and aggressive behavior or depression, or it can even drag them towards avoidance behavior such as smoking, addiction, and delinquency. This reveals the pressing nature of the juvenile life skills education and indicates that, when exposed to proper trainings, the students are enabled to find more appropriate solutions to their problems. The effectiveness of giving problem-solving skills to students in reducing social isolation and rage, has been proved by various researches. In a research project, the effects of mental health interventions at school and Life Skills Training classes were assessed, and the results

suggested that the program has been conducive to enhancing students' performance in their studies, personal life, interpersonal communication and peer relationships, in a way that the positive impact of the program with regard to students' studies were accentuated in school attendance, enhanced attention, improved Achievement Motivation, and regarding the personal life of students, this impact was felt on enhancing the assertiveness of the students and coping skills, reduced aggression, depression and improving their sense of responsibility and Life Satisfaction. On interpersonal level, as the research indicated, improvements in familial relationships and reduction in the conflicts with the peer group and the teachers were observed.

The identification of the concept of motivation and awareness of different incentives and motivations and their implications for students' learning process, can help teachers employ better methods for implementing their educational initiatives. Motivation could be defined as an element of energizing, tutoring and maintaining. Achievement Motivation is one of the most important acquired needs of every individual which encompasses a person's desires for bypassing the obstacles, attempting to excel and satisfy the criteria of a high stage. In fact, those with solid Achievement Motivation are responsible and reliable, challenge taker, and have a high self-esteem and hold out against external social pressures. Research outcome indicate that students with a high level of Achievement Motivation perform better in different walk of life such as their studies and social life.

Considering that there are limited bodies of research on the effectiveness of Life Skills Training in Achievement Motivation, nonetheless, the outcome of these project point to a similar fact and that is the positive impact of Life Skills Training on improving Achievement Motivation. For instance, Sepah Mansour (2007) has conducted a research, whose findings indicated that Life Skills Training will enhance Achievement Motivation. Albertyn et al. (2004) concluded that Life Skills Training will lead to a more activist role in life, solid accountability at workplace, futuristic planning and critical thinking, all of which are closely linked to Achievement Motivation. Other researchers (2001) indicated the effects of Life Skills Training on the students' self-esteem.

Among the personal variables, which are assumed to be positively affected by life skills training, is the Life Satisfaction. Life Satisfaction is a mental health indicator which signifies a person's viewpoint and general assessment of his life or his views on different aspect of life such as family life and education. Life Satisfaction is, in fact, intertwined with a host of psychological variables, such as; positive emotion, self-

esteem and optimism. Laughlin and Huebner (2001) have identified Life Satisfaction as a person's cognitive assessment of the quality of his or her life. Lazarus et al. (1980) have proved, in a research, that an optimistic upbeat approach is effective is the concept of Life Satisfaction. A person's past experiences in life, including his contents and discontents over life matters, could be different from the developments unfolding in later stages of their lives and this could have implications for health or malady. According to Erikson (1968), there are 8 psycho-sociological stages through which a healthy developing human should pass from infancy to adulthood. In each stage the person confronts and hopefully masters new challenges. Failure or success in each stage will have definitive impact on later Life Satisfaction. In other words, a person's failure or success record will be reflected in the completion of psycho-sociological responsibilities he or she is charges with during the present time or in the future. Stanli and Markman, quoting by Ali Ghanbari Hashemabadi and Kadkhodazadeh (2007), have conducted a research indicating that people learn proper communication and relationship skills in group trainings. Ali Ghanbari Hashemabadi and Kadkhodazadeh (2007) have posited, in a research, that Life Skills Training will assert a positive significant impact on Life Satisfaction. In a research, Schechtman (2005) has indicated that Life Skills Training will be effective in improving self-esteem; one of the variables affecting Life Satisfaction. Forneris, Dansish and Scot (2007) have shown that Life Skills Training could have positive impact on problem solving and be useful for enjoying social support. Mohammadi and Jokar (2010) has shown that Life Skills Training has positive impact on Life Satisfaction of high school students.

On the whole, the onset of adolescence period of students is secondary and high school, which is called the critical period on the one hand, and students new found social identity, self-analysis, coping with changes in their social lives on the other, makes the essentiality of Life Skills Training in high schools and secondary schools more pressing. There are also other reason for giving courses on Life Skills Training at school, mainly; the role played by Achievement Motivation and Life Satisfaction in students' mental health, research gaps and lack of sufficient relevant findings offered by the bodies of research in the field, ignoring the effectiveness of Life Skills Training in the studied variables and the implementation of the findings of this research in the Education System. Hence the current research aims at assessing the effectiveness of Life Skills Training on Achievement Motivation and students' Life Satisfaction.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

From Goal and Methodological point of view, the research was Applied and Experimental respectively and ran pre and post-tests on a Control Group randomly distributed. The research population was comprised of all the second graders studying in grade two of high school in Ardabil in the school year of 2011-2012. The research sample was made up of 40 male students split into Control and Experiment Group, each comprised of 20 students. A random multi-stage sampling was ran across the research population. To that aim, Ardabil County was divided into four regions, of which one was randomly selected in which 4 high schools were marked for the research. One class was randomly selected from each high school, and among the students of these four classes, 20 were selected to make the Control and another to participate in the Experiment Group. At the outset of the research, a pre-test was ran in order to measure Life Satisfaction and Achievement Motivation by means of a questionnaire. Afterwards in the next step, the Experiment Group was given 8 sessions of 120 minutes during a month exposing them to life skills training. At the end, a post-test was given. The following tools were employed in order to collect the data.

### **Achievement Motivation Questionnaire**

**(Quiz):** The quiz was created by Hermnes in 1970. It presents 29 incomplete sentences, at the end of which, there are four choices. Based on the intensity of Achievement Motivation, on the scale of Low-High or High-Low, every choice will be rated with a grade. In order to measure the credibility, Hermnes (1970) employed content validation based on the researches conducted on the concept of Achievement Motivation, and calculated the correlation coefficient of each question based on the achievement-oriented behaviors on the part of the participants, of range of coefficients for the questions on the quiz were 57% to 30%. Moreover, Hermnes pointed to a correlation coefficient between this questionnaire (quiz) and the Thematic Appreciation Test (TAT).

### **Brief Multidimensional Life Satisfaction Scale:**

This scale has been formulated by Heubner (1994) which rates overall satisfaction through 6 items on the 7-point Likert Scale. Different researchers have attested to the reliability and validity of this scale. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for this scale has been calculated at 76% in research carried out by Mohammadi and Jokar (2010). The current research calculated the Cronbach' Alpha at 88%.

**Intervention:** World Health Organization's Life Skills Training (1994) was given to the Experiment Group. The method will be discussed briefly;

First Step: Ego Development (Identifying the positive aspects and characteristics of the students, the

ability to distinguish between "doing wrong" and being a "Wrongdoer", recognizing the characteristics that appeal to a person and those which repel him, discerning that with different stages in growth, comes changes in the character).

Second Step: Emotional Development (to understand that other could feel rejected and lonely, teaching the methods for coping with feelings of rejection and loneliness, conceptualizing the fact that the source of emotions is the person himself not others, identifying undesirable emotions and learning to effectively cope with them and to manage situations of humiliation, embarrassment and rejection).

Third Step: Social Development (Discerning cooperative behaviors and consolidating them, training the skills necessary for effective dispute management, identifying the behaviors which could lead to rejection, being mocked and humiliated and embarrassed, and to learn to see the world from other's standpoint).

Fourth Step: Cognitive Development (Identifying the choices and determining their importance, distinguishing between rational and irrational beliefs, teaching the methods for employing the rational beliefs in personal situations and heeding the positive and negative consequences of decisions).

## **RESULTS**

After the subjects were selected, they were given a pretest. The Experiment Group was given 8 one-hour session during a month. Upon finishing the sessions, a post-test was run and the data was collected and analyzed by means of Multivariate Variance Analysis.

As shown in Table 1, Average and Standard Deviation calculated based on the pre-test of the students in the Control Group for Achievement Motivation were 59.35 and 6.71 respectively and Life Satisfaction was calculated respectively at 21.95 and 2.78. Average and Standard Deviation calculated based on the post-test of the students in the Control Group for Achievement Motivation were 62.75 and 7.77 respectively and the Life Satisfaction stood respectively at 22.10 and 2.63. For the Experiment Group the Average and Standard Deviation of the students based on the pre-test for Achievement Motivation and Life Satisfaction were 63.45 and 7.95 respectively and Life Satisfaction stood respectively at 20.55 and 2.44. Average and Standard Deviation, calculated based on the post-test of the student in the Experiment Group, were respectively 79.80 and 7.02, which for Life Satisfaction the numbers were respectively 28.75 and 4.19.

Before applying the parametric test to Multivariate Analysis of Variance, in order to observe its assumptions, the Leuven and Box Tests were run. According to Box Test, which was not significant to any

of the variables, the homogeneity condition was correctly observed variance/covariance matrices (BOX=29.35,  $F=1.78$ ,  $P=0.26$ ). Based on Leuven Test, considering its insignificance for all the variables, the condition of equality of variance was observed between the groups. The findings of Wilks Lambda Test suggest that the group has significant impact on the Achievement Motivation and Life Satisfaction (Wilks Lambda= 0.284,  $F=46.61$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). The abovementioned test proves the applicability of MANOVA. The findings suggested that there was

significant difference, at least, between one of the variables in the two groups.

Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference ( $P<0.001$ ) between the average figures of Achievement Motivation ( $F=49.81$ ) and Life Satisfaction ( $F=43.84$ ) in the group that has received Life Skills Training and the Control Group. In other words, Life Skills Training, based on the two groups' averages will improve the Achievement Motivation and Life Satisfaction.

**Table 1.** Average and Standard Deviation (SD) of Achievement Motivation and Life Satisfaction in the Control and Experiment Group

Variable	Stages	Control Group		Experiment Group	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
Achievement Motivation	Pre-test	59.35	6.71	63.45	7.95
	Post-test	62.75	7.77	79.80	7.02
Life Satisfaction	Pre-test	21.95	2.78	20.55	2.44
	Post-test	22.10	2.63	28.75	4.19

**Table 2.** MANOVA findings for calculating the difference in the Pre and Post-tests of Achievement Motivation and Life Satisfaction in the Control and Experiment Group

Variables	Total Square	DF	Average Square	F	Sig.
Achievement Motivation	1677.02	1	1677.02	49.81	0.001
Life Satisfaction	648.02	1	648.02	43.84	0.001

## DISCUSSION

The current research aimed at studying the effectiveness of Life Skills Training on motivating high school students towards achievement and progress and improving their Life Satisfaction. As the findings of the research suggest, Life Skills Training will enhance Achievement Motivation and improve Life Satisfaction of the Experiment Group Students. The findings of this research is consistent with other bodies of research conducted by other researchers. The findings of the research indicates that Life Skills Training is effective in improving the Achievement Motivation of students. To further explain the findings of research, it should be clarified that life skills covers a host of psycho-sociological and inter-personal skills which could help the individual make informed decisions, communicate effectively, develop their coping skills and management abilities, have a healthy prolific life in which they exude a solid motivation for achievement in different areas, one of the most important of which is a high level achievement in educational environments. This type of training, through improving students' Achievement Motivation, will energize them and take their activities to whole new level which will incline them towards certain goals. Life Skills Training will improve a person's self-perception and his perception of others and will boost his self-confidence, assertiveness, sense of responsibility and inter-personal relationships.

On the other hand, as various researches have shown, Life Satisfaction is a determining factor in mental health. Variables such as social relationships, the level of perceived social support, daily stressful situations, self-esteem and assertiveness are among the defining factors for shaping the amount of satisfaction in life. As has been confirmed earlier, Life Skills Training has a positive effect on assertiveness, self-esteem and sense of responsibility and any increase in these factors will, in turn, improve social support and level of attention given by others, which will ultimately reduce mental pressure. In this regard, Rathus (1990) maintains that social support can reduce the destructive effects of stress in five ways; 1) Emotional Care: including listening to people's problems and empathizing with them, caring, understanding and encouraging them; 2) Assistance: means a kind support which will lead to adaptive behavior; 3) Information: giving advice and tips on how to improve their coping abilities; 4) Appraisal: providing feedback on improving the performance; 5) Socialization: receiving social support is normally through socialization and will create beneficial results. All the five are to be introduced into Life Skills Training. There has been evidence from different researches showing that training and education is effective on the attitudes and behaviors of individuals. Therefore, assessing the effects of Life Skills Training on Life

Satisfaction has been a part of goals defined by current research. Stanli and Markman quoting by Ali Ghanbari Hashemabadi and Kadkhodazadeh (2007,) have shown that people learn appropriate communications though group trainings. A reason for this could be attributed to group activities which will lead the individual towards keeping a balance between his desires and those of the other members of the group. Moreover, group interactions will provide opportunities for practicing verbal and non-verbal face-to-face exchanges and will leave no room for likely mis-interpretations. Its seems that after undergoing effective communication skills and learning how to cope with negativity, person's communications are drastically improved and this will give them more satisfaction over their interactions with others.

In the course of conducting this research we were held back by lack of educational curricula for Life Skills Training, absence of follow-up sessions and few monthly sessions. It is suggested that the predicaments be addressed duly in future researches in order to increase the capacity of the findings generalization. High School curricula authorities are also recommended to appropriately address the issue and incorporate properly tailored courses on Life Skills Training for the students in this circumstances.

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