

A Dynamic Perspective on Cultivating Self-Awareness in Life Skills Education

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Abstract:

We all face many challenges in different phases of our life. To adapt and cope with the situation in changing environment is very significant. The capability of an individual to deal with the life challenges with a positive spirit and tackle them very effectively is known as life skills. Self-Awareness means knowing one's strength and weakness along with the flaws, perception, thoughts, ideals, beliefs, attitudes, reactions, emotions and feelings. The present study is an attempt to investigate the self-awareness among adolescent children of adolescence is a period of stress and strain, where the individuals face issues related to various psycho social and emotional aspects. Adolescent period become crucial, where the children have to take many meaningful decisions in their life such as educational, career etc, where they have face challenges with utmost confidence. Here comes the importance of Life Skills in to account. The present study focused on Self-awareness. A test of self-awareness is developed by the investigator and administered among 200 adolescent children. The result led the investigator to develop an activity package which is specially meant to create and develop self-awareness among the children. The package includes various activities which are helpful to strengthen self-awareness. The study has many implications too. It will be an eye opener to everyone concerned in the sense that the activities included in the package is highly useful to nourish self-awareness.

Key Words: Self Awareness, Life Skill Education, self-confidence, introspection

Introduction

Life skills education constitutes a fundamental component of the educational curriculum. Life skills establish a robust foundation for existence. Life skills are fundamental competencies necessary for maximising one's potential in life. Life skills enable individuals to maintain attention, enhance critical thinking, and improve problem-solving abilities as well as emotional and stress management.

The WHO (1997) defined Life Skills as "the capacity for adaptive and constructive behaviour that empowers individuals to effectively manage the demands and challenges of daily life." Life skills-based education is a method focused on behaviour modification or development, aimed at achieving a balance among three domains: knowledge, attitude, and skills (UNICEF, 2000).

The significance of possessing life skills in an individual's life is rooted in their capacity to adapt to various conditions and achieve success in the advancement and flourishing of society. A critical issue requiring immediate attention and resolution is the deficiency of life skills among the new generation. This is due to an absence of life skills in the outcomes of educational

institutions. Consequently, numerous individuals falter in their professional and personal endeavours due to the lack of essential abilities. Life skills education empowers individuals to enhance their communication, cooperation, and collaboration abilities, instills confidence to confront real-life challenges, fosters innovative thinking and problem-solving techniques, and offers strategies for socialisation, friendship formation, and awareness of the consequences of their actions and behaviours.

Children at the age of adolescents is going through the most crucial period. They might be striving for many reasons viz., identity crisis, emotional, cognitive and social development, physical changes, autonomy and independence etc. Above all, adolescent period is where the individual shows risk taking behaviour. Here comes the importance of Life Skills in to account. Important Life Skills such as Self awareness, Empathy, Coping with stress, coping with emotions, communication skills and interpersonal skills are remarkable here.

In the present study the investigator made an attempt to investigate the level of self-awareness among secondary school children and thereby to develop an activity package which includes various activities which helps to develop and nourish self-awareness among adolescent children.

Need and significance of the study

Self-awareness is the ability to see yourself clearly and objectively through reflection and introspection (Ackerman,2020). Self-awareness is the capacity that a person has to introspect. It includes gaining an understanding of and insight into one's strengths, qualities, weaknesses, defects, ideas, thoughts, beliefs, ideals, responses, reactions, attitude, emotions and motivations. There are number researches carried out on self awareness of individuals. The results of previous researches indicate that there are many benefits on practicing self awareness.

According to Sutton (2016), "practicing self-awareness makes us more proactive, boost our acceptance, and encourage positive self-development. Self-awareness allows us to see things from the perspective of others, practice self-control, work creatively and productively, and experience pride in ourselves and our work as well as general self-esteem" (Silvia & O'Brien, 2004). The results of the study conducted by Ridley, Schutz, Glanz, & Weinstein (1992) indicate that "by practicing self awareness, it leads to better decision making". Another study conducted by Sutton, Williams, & Allinson (2015) found that self awareness make us better at our jobs, better communicators in the workplace, and enhance our self-confidence and job-related wellbeing.

Self-awareness is one's ability to identify and understand their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. As a result, one can monitor themselves better and create a more purposeful life. In terms of psychology, self-awareness is often defined as the ability to engage in some kind of reflective awareness.

When adolescent children are concerned, Self awareness is one among the most essential life skills.

Self-awareness test is an effective way to find out who we actually are. Many people do not have full data when it comes to understanding who they really are. For instance, their strengths and weaknesses. This could be due to the fact that people don't usually look at themselves

objectively. This is where a self-awareness test can help them. More importantly, this test will help us to reach our highest potential.

Objectives of the study

To know the extent of Self-awareness among Adolescent Children

To develop and execute an activity package on Self-awareness for adolescent children

To suggest different strategies to improve self awareness

Methodology

As the study was conducted among adolescent children from various schools, the sample consists of 150 children from various secondary schools. Simple random sampling technique was adopted for the study. The data was collected using Self awareness test developed by the investigator

Tool used for the Study

The tool used in the present study was a test on Self awareness developed by the investigator. The test consists of 33 items. The respondents were asked to give most appropriate answers which are suitable to them. The statement includes situational test items along with self reflective items.

Findings of the study

Out of 200 participants, only 22% shows high level of self-awareness, 30% low level of self-awareness and remaining 48% belongs to average level of self-awareness.

Among the average level, most come at the marginal average.

The distribution of level of self-awareness among children of Special home is shown in figure 1

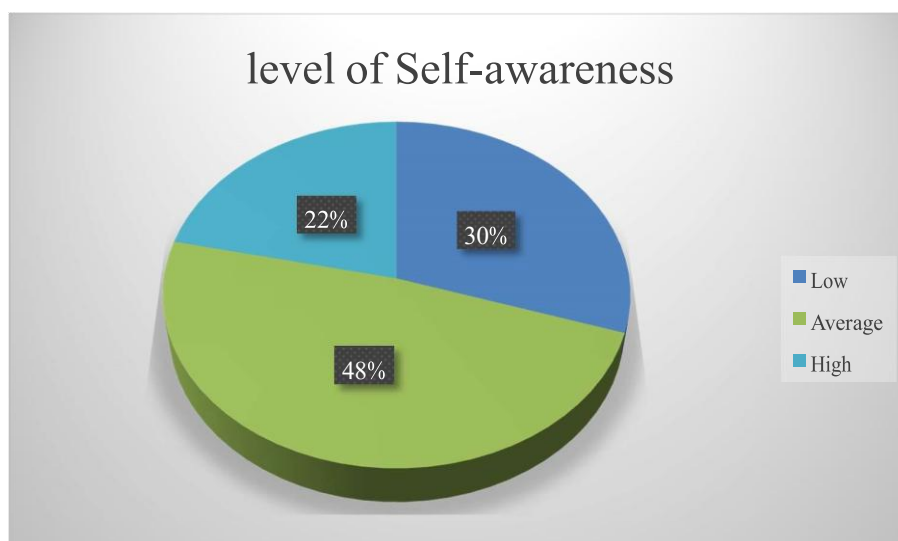


Figure1. Data and distribution of percentage of pre-test of Self-awareness among adolescent children

From the result, the investigator arrived at a conclusion that, the children should be acquainted with

various activities and strategies to develop and strengthen self-awareness. At this point, the investigator decided to develop an activity package on self-awareness which includes different activities that can be performed by the children very simply by following the instructions given by the investigator. An outline of the activity package for nourishing self-awareness is given as follows.

Self-awareness Activity Kit- Who am I

The activity kit on self-awareness named 'who am I' is a well oriented and structured tool which is planned and developed by the investigator based on the key areas of self-awareness. The activity kit includes six exercises and seven activities. Every activity included is aimed to nourish self-awareness among children of special homes. All activities included are self-motivational and are developed with the expectation that the children will participate and do the exercises with much interest.

The exercises are planned and developed based on the key areas of self-awareness. The key areas for self-awareness include one's personality traits, personal values, emotions, habits, and the psychological needs that motivate one's behaviours.

Doing the exercises, the children will be able to become more confident and more creative. They will get a clear picture on themselves, their strength and their positives along with their weakness/ limitations and negatives. The exercises/ activities included in the package are given as follows.

Exercise 1. The You within You (includes 2 activities), Exercise 2. The Real you, Exercise 3. Ray of hope, Exercise 4. Possessions, Exercise 5 Ranking priorities, Exercise 6. Really Real. Among the seven exercises, the first two belongs to the area personality traits, exercise 3 belongs to the area personal values, exercise 4 belongs to emotions, exercise 5 belongs to the area habits and exercise 6 belongs to the area motivation.

Training on Self-awareness

All the exercises included in the Self-awareness Activity Kit was performed by the children. Attention was given to ensure that the children selected randomly for the pilot study upon the self-awareness test was executed, the same was the children selected for executing self-awareness exercises also among them those who coming under low and average level of Self-awareness they were selected for the training programme. All the exercises have stipulated time within which the activities should be completed. If they demand a revision or rework for their activity, the chance was given for the same. In a single day, only one exercise will be performed. The children will disclose what they have in mind or what they have written in the paper provided. The presentation should be done in front of all. By doing so, day by day it was clear that the children are becoming more and more confident to disclose what they really are and what they really possess as their own. They can reveal themselves what their real strengths and weaknesses are. What they think of themselves was burst out from them. Self-realization makes an individual to do more and more positive things which makes him more and more energetic and self-confident.

The same self-awareness test was implemented as a post-test among the children after two weeks of time. The result indicates the relevance of the activity package.



Figure1. Data and distribution of percentage of post-test result of Self-awareness among adolescent children

The investigator conducted Small Focus Group Discussions with the children to know how beneficial the activities are. They responded that by performing the self-awareness exercises designed by the investigator, creativity and self-awareness among them have increased. They said that all these abilities and limitations were already within them, but they were not aware about it. But after performing each activity, their confidence has been increased. One of the participant responded that it is a chance to retrospect, some other said that before participating these activities I was unaware of many of my qualities, but now I know myself and knowing oneself is a greatest thing. All these responses indicates that the activity kit on self-awareness developed by the investigator was really useful for them. From the observation and feedback collected from the children and authority concerned, it was clear that through these activities, the students become aware of themselves in a very positive way.

Implications of the study

As a pilot study, the investigator developed and implemented a self-awareness test among the children. The result led the investigator to the thought of essentiality to strengthen self-awareness among them. Because, become self-aware is the need of the hour. In the case of adolescent children, they have to be well equipped with utmost confidence in any challenges comes on their way. It could be accomplished only through nurturing self-awareness. The study has many implications. It is an eye opener to the authority concerned to take necessary initiatives to nurture self-awareness among the children. The activity kit developed by the investigator can be used as a device to enhance self-awareness even to other individuals of any stage. The children should be aware about the importance of self-awareness along with the technique to develop and maintain their self-awareness.

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