

Effective Factors on Enhancing Life Skills

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effective factors on enhancing life skills, according to the point of view of educational experts. To select sample group, using stratified random sampling, 200 individuals (110 males and 90 females) were selected based on the formula for determining sample size. Assessment tool in this study was a 49-item questionnaire, devised by the researcher that was assembled by using theories and investigating findings of previous researches was sent to the scholars in three events based on the Delphi Technique. The credit of assessment tool was calculated by Cronbach's alpha, and the total credit amount test was equal to 0.99. Factor analysis indicated that the effective factors on enhancing life skills in different periods of life, including the first factor, skills in childhood (51%) with 17 indicators, the second factor; skills in adolescence and youth (8%) with 16 indicators, and the third factor; skills in adulthood (5.3%) with 16 indicators were identified. Finally, these three factors explain about 63 percent of the total variance of life skills.

Kew words: Life skills, childhood, adolescence, youth and adulthood.

1. INTRODUCTION

Among all the concepts that educational experts, psychologists, sociologists and others, have studied in different situations, "life skills" is one of the most important areas of research effecting on humans' success. In fact, today, possessing life skills is necessary for a successful life.

National and international findings indicate that, not only learning various skills is essential to humans' success and guidance, but also having life skills is the main base for humans' success and guidance in the current situation and the future ahead [1, p9].

Life skills enable people to adapt to the society and meet their physiological, spiritual, emotional, mental, emotional, social, safety, self-actualization, and other needs efficiently. In other words, life skills make people's lives familiar with four norms, success, independence, being public, and distinction, and in fact, turn human resources into human capitals [1, p8].

In order to have developed, ethical and ultimately righteous humans, learning life skills is necessary. People through life skills, are able to understand the driving and preventive factors in themselves, become familiar with the environment, develop realism, having healthy relationships with other human beings, strengthening the feeling of being valuable, extending love and sharing it with others, and ultimately have a successful life. Thus, in order to have a developed, active, creative, innovative, and ethical, it is necessary for all the human beings to learn these skills and teach them to other people.

In general, life skills, ability to communicate effectively and efficiently with self, others, local, national, and international communities, enable individuals to turn their neutral and negative behaviors into positive behaviors and ultimately, success in various aspects of life becomes possible.

Since the 1930s, extensive studies have been conducted on life skills. According to Argill [2] and Mikelson et al. [3] the diversity of these studies indicates the importance of these skills in having a healthy and moral life.

Several studies have been conducted on factors that enhanced life skills that we examined some of them.

UNICEF [4], in a study, has divided life skills into following three categories:

A) Learning how to know (cognitive abilities), such as, decision-making skills, problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, etc.

B) Learning for Living (individual skills), such as, growth and development of internal focus of control skills, emotion management skills, stress management skills, etc.

C) Learning how to live with others (interpersonal skills), such as, interpersonal skills, negotiation skills, conflict solving skills, empathy skills, coordination skills, teamwork skills, democracy skills, influencing skills, etc.

UNESCO [5], in a study, has divided the most important life skills into following ten items:

1. Interpersonal skills such as, listening, expressing feelings, verbal and nonverbal intelligence, etc.
2. Negotiation skills such as, conflict and negotiation management.
3. Sympathy and empathy skills.
4. Teamwork and coordination skills.
5. Influencing and enhancing motivation skills.
6. Decision-making skills.

7. Critical thinking skills.
8. Changing and interpretation skills.
9. Stress management skills.
10. Living with others skills.

World Health Organization [6] in a study mentions the most important life skills to be, cognitive skills, study skills, communication skills, responsibility skills, sympathy skills, empathy skills, attention skills, developing aspects of intelligence skills, problem solving skills, creative thinking skills, critical thinking skills, self-awareness skills, coping with emotional issues skills, coping with all kinds of anxieties and stresses skills, tying technical rationality with the emotional rationality.

Mckay et al. [7] in a study, mentioned life skills to be, listening, expressing feelings and desires, mutual enhancing, healthy relationship, identifying cognitive distortions, problem solving, negotiation, changing irritant strategies, coping with anger, and etc.

Young [8], in a study has divided life skills into human skills, conceptual skills, technical skills and attitude skills, and he believes that the context for all life skills is human skills.

Zettle[9] in a study has divided life skills into decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, effective communication skills, interpersonal skills, self-awareness skills, empathy skills, coping with excitement skills, coping with mental pressure skills, knowing self and others skills, and skills in being successful.

Based on what was said, the main objective of this study was to prepare an appropriate answer to the following questions:

1. What are the effective factors on enhancing life skills?
2. Of what indicators, each of these factors is composed?

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The method of the research, considering development objectives, and the data, was quantitative, and considering the type of the survey, the method was cross-sectional. That was because the researcher planned to find a context and searched to find out about, when, why, how and who and to describe, explain and explore the information in a specified period of the sample.

The study sample was comprised of education experts in Tehran, with doctoral study. To select a representative sample group, and to increase measurement accuracy of the sample size, the stratified random sampling was used. The sample size was comprised of 200 people (110 men, 90 women) based on the formula for determining sample size (Number of samples = the number of questions \times 15 or 20, or at least 500 people and if the sample are experts, of 200 people is adequate [10]).

Assessment tool in this study was a 49-item questionnaire, devised by the researcher that was assembled by using theories and investigating findings of previous researches was sent to the scholars in three events based on the Delphi Technique. It has a continuum between 1 to 7, 1 shows the minimum and 7 shows the maximum acceptability of each criteria for the subjects.

The credit of assessment tool was calculated by Cronbach's alpha and the total credit amount test was equal to 0.99. The assessment tool validity was calculated by factor analysis of exploratory type known as dissecting principal components, which is a relatively high loading factor, and all the questions of the questionnaire, have been confirmed.

In analyzing the data, conventional methods of descriptive statistics and a statistical test called factor analysis of exploratory type known as dissecting principal components were used. The presuppositions of the test will justify research questions.

3. RESULTS

A) Describing the data: the statistical characteristics of the three effective factors on enhancing life skills are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Priority of statistical characteristics of the scores (n=200)

Factor	Minimum	Maximum	The Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Strain
Skills in childhood	1	7	6.40	1.76	1.33	-1.11	0.87
Skills in adolescence and youth	1	7	6.30	2.13	1.46	-0.85	0.13
Skills in adulthood	1	7	5.75	3.76	1.49	-0.84	0.25

From the Table shown in Table 1 we can deduce the following:

1. Comparing the means of three factors, from the point of view of sample groups, indicates that, life skills in childhood, life skills in adolescence and youth, and life skills in adulthood are respectively effective in enhancing life skills.
2. Comparing standard deviation of factors, from the point of view of sample groups, indicates that the distribution in skills in adolescence factor is more than other factors.

3. From the point of view of the sample group, the minimum score for each factor is 1 and the maximum is 7.

4. Positive skewness indicates that distribution of skewness is normal to the right compared with distribution, and positive strain indicates that the distribution is higher than normal distribution.

B) Analyzing data:

In order to confirm the data explanation and extending the findings of the research to the society from which it is extracted, we have used factor analysis of exploratory type known as dissecting principal components and its results are mentioned respectively in the Tables below. All 49 indicators for measuring life skills, from birth to death, are of relatively high correlation and no indicator is excluded.

To perform factor analysis by using dissecting principal components in order to ensure effectiveness of sampling and to make sure the matrix is not zero; correlation of the data is calculated 5km in the community, equal to 0.984. Bargltsphericitytest, even atlevelsless than0.001is meaningful and we can conclude that performing factor analysis is justified.

To determine that by how many factors the assessment tool is saturated, three indicators,

- 1) Special value
- 2) Ratio of the variance determined by each factor and,
- 3) Rotated diagram of the special values is considered, and based on these three indicators, three factors were extracted.

Table 2. Final characteristics of the factor analysis to extract effective factors on enhancing life skills

Factor	Special Value	Percentage of Variance	Density Percentage
1	360.40	51%	51%
2	377.6	8%	59%
3	606.2	3.5%	63%

As Table 2 shows, the portion of the first factor with the special value is 40.36, about 51 percent of all the variance of the variables, which is very dramatic and quite distinct from the portions of the rest of factors. Since not rotated factor matrix and its loading factors do not produce a meaningful structure, as it was previously mentioned, we decided to convey factors extracted based on conventional method, to the new axes, by using varimax rotation so that overall form of the materials of the questionnaire is discovered and identifying a simpler structure that displays main and relatively light lines to reach interpretable solutions becomes possible. Factor matrix produced because of varimax rotation is displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Rotated factor matrix of all the 49 questions in Varimax method

Question	Factor 1	Question	Factor 2	Question	Factor 3
1	861.0	43	801.0	39	694.0
2	849.0	42	796.0	38	682.0
3	842.0	41	788.0	37	671.0
4	835.0	40	782.0	36	662.0
5	830.0	12	741.0	35	651.0
6	810.0	13	721.0	34	640.0
7	808.0	14	714.0	24	636.0
8	802.0	15	702.0	25	620.0
9	792.0	16	669.0	26	610.0
10	789.0	17	619.0	27	559.0
11	782.0	18	607.0	28	541.0
49	871.0	19	599.0	29	532.0
48	842.0	20	581.0	30	522.0
47	836.0	21	572.0	31	517.0
46	820.0	22	536.0	32	510.0
45	816.0	23	521.0	33	505.0
44	721.0				

Based on the performed analysis, six factors were extracted. The criteria for describing and naming extracted factors were:

- A) The nature and size of variables of which the extracted factors had the biggest share.
- B) Cultural investigating of the words and expressions to check name, nature,prospects and connotations of variables.
- C) Present theories and results of previous studies.

4. DISCUSSION

Findings of the present research indicate the followings:

1. Totally, 49 indicators to measure human beings' life skills are effective and all of them are consistent with cultural, social, religious, political, economic etc. values of the Iranian society.

2. Totally, three factors to enhance human beings' life skills in the Iranian society are extracted as follows:

First factor: life skills in childhood (0.51) which includes these indicators:

- 1) Skills to deal with problems
- 2) Social skills
- 3) Communication skills
- 4) Developing confidence and self esteem skills
- 5) Pattern variability and matching skills
- 6) Cooperation and collaboration skills
- 7) Strengthening responsibility skills
- 8) Dealing with fear skills
- 9) Dealing with aggression skills
- 10) Dealing with jealousy skills
- 11) Dealing with lying skills
- 12) Dealing with anxiety skills
- 13) Dealing with diffidence and loneliness
- 14) Growing daring and ability to say no skills
- 15) Dealing with feeling inferior skills
- 16) Playing skills
- 17) Leisure time skills

Second factor: life skills in adolescence and youth (8%) which includes these indicators:

- 1) Developing thinking skills
- 2) Developing creativity and innovation skills
- 3) Developing emotional intelligence skills
- 4) Problem-solving skills
- 5) Developing optimal decision making skills
- 6) Acquiring motivation skills
- 7) Effective study skills
- 8) Obtaining independency of character skills
- 9) Strengthening participation skills
- 10) Positive thinking skills
- 11) Coping with hopelessness and despair skills
- 12) Coping with puberty
- 13) Choosing friends skills
- 14) Relationship with the opposite sex skills
- 15) Following the laws and regulations skills
- 16) Developing citizenship skills

Third factor: life skills in adulthood (3.5%) which includes these indicators:

- 1) Successful marriage skills
- 2) Developing love in life skills
- 3) Expressing affection and love skills
- 4) Obtaining happiness and relaxation skills
- 5) Strengthening patience and forgiving skills
- 6) Coping with marital conflicts skills
- 7) Coping with mental pressure skills
- 8) Dealing with drug abuse skills
- 9) Dealing with anger skills
- 10) Dealing with depression skills
- 11) Dealing with Scrupulosity skills
- 12) Dealing with illnesses skills
- 13) Dealing with pain skills
- 14) Dealing with forgetfulness and memory loss skills
- 15) Dealing with the lack of skills to deal with aging skills

These findings are consistent with previous researches such as, Eric [11], UNICEF [4], UNESCO [5], World Health Organization [6] etc.

Due to lack of credits, triple and Narrative factors have not been calculated converging. In the end, given the importance of effective factors on enhancing life skills, it is suggested to apply this research in the whole country and all the organizations by psychologists, and trained, and experienced education experts and a standard tool for this important matter be devised.

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