

# Exploring Perceptions of Elementary School Teachers on the Importance of School-Based Life Skills Education. A Case Study

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**Abstract**— There is an unusual increase in the cases of child abuse, early marriages, suicide, physical and mental violence causing a large number of school dropouts in elementary classes. This calls for the requirement to investigate or evaluate the perceptions of teachers about life skills education in public sector elementary schools. The study was conducted using qualitative interviews from twelve teachers of two public schools where life skill education is being taught. Thematic analysis was used for data analysis. The findings of the study revealed that teachers are aware and have a positive attitude towards life skills education. This study will contribute to raising awareness.

**Keywords**— adolescence, life skills education, public sector schools, teachers' perceptions.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The definition of Life Skills determined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as capabilities for the adaptive and positive attitude that empower individuals to deal efficiently with the demands and challenges of everyday life (Monk, 2001; Palmer, 2014;). They essentially indicate the psychosocial skills that are set around valued behavior and comprise reflective skills like critical thinking and solving their issues. They add personal skills too, like interpersonal skills and self-awareness like to engage in communicating effectively, upholding a healthy relationship with others. Practicing life skills can carry abilities like self-esteem, civility, and acceptance, action capabilities of the modern secondary school students and can produce enough abilities amongst them to have the liberty to decide what to do in an unusual position. Health and living, education can stable life skills education or the other way round (Ingham, 2010).

This study will help to identify the factors that why teachers do not provide life skill education to the children in schools. In a regularly changing atmosphere, having life skill education is a crucial part of being able to encounter the challenges of everyday life (Ghasemian, & Kumar, 2015; Sukhodolsky, Golub, Stone & Orban, 2004). To manage the growing pace and change style of living, students must need advanced life skills such as the talent of tackling stress and frustration. Therefore, policymakers should add Life skill education in the curriculum and teachers should effectively instill it (Reza, 2012).

The youth is deficient in proper life skills to handle the pressures of this intermediate phase and make informed

selections. It was learning through the related projects on Life Skills Based Education that there are no sources of information like radio, television, internet, or newspapers accessible to the Madrassah students (Huda et al., 2017). Moreover, the people of this age group do not have any adult family member around who can help them, especially girls because their parents are equally uninformed about their roles, rights, and responsibilities (Hadjipateras, Akullu, Owero, Dendo & Nyenga, 2006).

Because of the unavailability of valid sources of information and reliable relationships, young people encounter problematic conditions (Coppock, & McGovern, 2014; Ladd, Buhs, Troop, Smith, & Hart, 2002). Well-timed education by concentrating on knowledge, improving attitudes, and skill-building can authorize young people to use their energies in a responsible manner (Akpama, 2013). Due to the relative originality of the idea, comprehending and developing, the thought of life skills has been a topic of rigorous research in South Asia during recent times. However, it has not been an easy task due to a common hesitancy towards accepting the issue of sexuality of young people and inadequate or no youth-friendly facilities, structures, or systems, which reinforce the upgrade of life skills education.

Schools are a place where a large number of young people gather, where they can not only be taught life skills, but also can be followed and reinforced by creating a suitable environment (Magnani, et al., 2005). The existing education system of Pakistan has a minimum focus on the improvement of essential life skills that are required to endorse critical thinking and healthy behaviors. Moreover, in our society, the reluctance to talk about topics as sexual and reproductive health makes the teaching of SRH related issues even harder (Bhattacharjee & Costigan, 2005).

## Research Questions

1. What is your perception of life skills education?
2. What are the perceptions of elementary school teachers on the importance of school-based life skill education?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### What is Life Skills Education?

WHO (1999) pointed ten essential life skills which include: 1) empathy 2) self-awareness 3) creative thinking 4) critical thinking 5) problem solving 6) decision making 7) communicating effectively 8) Interpersonal relationship

9) handling stress 10) managing the emotional state (p. 01). The addition of Life Skill Education in the secondary teacher education curriculum is a current practice worldwide (Behrani, 2016).

### **The Need of Life Skills Education in Schools**

Schools are a suitable place to introduce life skills education because schools play a fair part in youngster's social life (Prajapati, Sharma & Sharma, 2016). For the implementation of life skill education in Pakistan, we need teachers with great experience and knowledge about life skills, high integrity with parents and community members, opportunities and equipment for short and long-term evaluation (Dhawan, 2014). LSE is so much pertinent to the needs of young people when the schools make it a part of their curriculum; it helps with major problems like indiscipline, school dropouts, and adolescent pregnancies (UNAIDS, 2003). Aside from the effect on the health of children, there are other benefits of a school as an institution. Such as, evaluation of life skills programs recommends that the approaches, which are used, can help to revamp the teacher-student relationship and signals are indicating that life skills teachings are linked with few reports that are related to classroom behavior problems (Kurtdele-Fidan, & Aydogdu, 2018; MOE, 2008). There are researches present which indicate that improved academic performances are a result of teaching life skills; less bullying, great self-confidence in children and healthier relationship between children and parents are other benefits (Weissberg, Caplan & Sivo, 1989). Thus, Life Skill Education is the best way to equip the learner with capacities that allow his/her positive and versatile behavior to handle the demands and challenges of everyday life effectively.

We must be fully aware of how significant these skills are in children's life. It is obliged to put effort into adding life skills into our daily teaching practices (Behrani, 2016). Our goal should always be to work on making the lives of children better, to activate our students' sense of developing life skills, and to support our students be prepared for the continuously fluctuating world that waits for them (Prajapati, Sharma & Sharma, 2016).

As stated by Sahu & Gupta (2013) Adolescents and children are the creatures who think and feel with a mental complexity level that is just becoming common. WHO (1994) declares that in the present era kids live in a kind of environment that is very complex. Moreover, there are various platforms of communication within their reach (Jones, Lavalley & Tod, 2011). Electronic media have a powerful influence on adolescents and children, which is appearing to be the main reason for overshadowing the influence of family specifically, parents in certain conditions (Huda et al., 2017). Communication with friends, peer pressure and advertisements of media, etc. have a powerful impact on adolescents and growing children (Alhassan, & Doodoo, 2020). The influence of parents in shaping social and moral values and the conventional school curriculum is becoming progressively unable of preparing children capable of the skills, which they needed to face practical life (Shek et al., 2020). The nature of taking a risk is considered a symbol of adolescence and if they are not being provided with skills

to guard themselves, the possibility of divergent or imperfect growth will be real.

### **Educational Benefits**

i. Life skills education presents student-centered and interactive methods of teaching which can influence positively on:

The relations among pupils and teachers. Enjoyment of young people while learning. Job satisfaction for the teacher.

Absenteeism and dropout rate from school. (Shek et al., 2020).

ii. Life skills education influences some manifestations positively on the academic performance of children. As soon as the pupils or students start to feel that they are being involved in matters of relevance to their personal lives, they contribute more and study more (Alhassan, & Doodoo, 2020; Parsons, Hunter & Warne, 1988).

iii. It is crucial to review the curriculum of teacher education and start including transformational and critical learning theory in teacher education for reflecting on the complication of the teaching and learning process (Bowers, 1999; Nolet, 2009; Corcoran, 1999; Kiefer & Kemple, 1999).

### **Health Benefits**

i. Life skills education demonstrates the blend of social and psychological (i.e. psychosocial) features that take part in a healthy behavior (Srikala & Kishore, 2010).

ii. The execution level of life skills education in schools shows that it is the need of every child.

iii. The advancement of social and personal skills is the main characteristic of health promotion involvements that focus on empowering a person to endorse his/her health along with the health of other people and of the neighborhood or community (Van Der Heide et al., 2013).

### **Cultural Benefits**

i. Life skills education benefits young people who are growing up in a modern era and positively caters to their needs.

ii. Life skills education help students to be a responsible citizen and do better towards the society and culture (Vaidya, 2014).

Life Skills are psychosocial abilities, which develop a flexible and positive attitude in a person to deal adequately with all the ups and downs in everyday life (Poole, Álvarez, Penagos & Vázquez, 2013). The evolution of Life Skills is an ongoing process, which initiates at a very young age and proceed throughout life. Currently, Life Skills-Based Education (LSBE) has played a vital role in child development and promotion of healthy behaviors all around the world. In 1986, the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion approved life skills as an imperative cause of making improved health choices (Kaur, 2015). According to UNICEF (2003) "A behavior change or behavior development approach designed to address the balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude, and skills" (p. 01). Tabulawa (2013) further defines Life skills education as "Life skills education is a structured program of needs and outcomes-based participatory learning that aims to increase positive and adaptive behavior by assisting individuals to develop and practice psycho- social skills that minimize

risk factors and maximize protective factors. Life skills, education programs are theory- and evidenced-based, learner-focused, delivered by competent facilitators, and appropriately evaluated to ensure continuous improvement of documented results.” (p. 37).

Research evidence identifies that turns in risk behavior are improbable if education is not catering to the important competencies like knowledge, attitude, and skills (Parmar, 2015).

Subasree and Nair (2014) state that students need life skills to deal with difficulties related to their routine life. These issues might be plentiful for them. Few issues are physical changes in the body, scoring less in tests, career orientation, peer pressure, issues of interpersonal relationships, pressure from parents, no protection from violence, lack of recognition, respect, and trust, the influence of media, poor access to health and education services, liabilities like poverty, single parenting, drug abuse, child labor, emotional uncertainty, mental health issues (Huda et al., 2017; Sahu & Gupta, 2013). Teachers play an imperative role in student’s life because students spend their so much time in school so teachers should provide directions and support to their students to handle these issues and solve them efficiently (Dhawan, 2014). Students should be taught about how to take things positively and have a positive attitude towards the difficulties (Silva, 2002).

### III. METHODOLOGY

The research was based on life skills education, provided by schools. This case study used a qualitative research approach in which twelve teachers from Two public sector schools participated.

#### Research Design

The research objectives and research questions were exploratory, so in this study, the researcher used the qualitative research method to observe feelings, thoughts, and behaviors and to show the bigger picture to the participants. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews which comprised open-ended questions. Participants were interviewed individually.

#### Population and Sample

The population of this research paper was all elementary school teachers from public sector schools in Karachi. The sample was based on the twelve elementary school teachers of Government schools. The researcher chose the convenient sampling technique and conducted the interviews with all twelve elementary school teachers.

These two schools were purposely chosen as they catered to the students of nearby slum areas. Geographically, both schools were near to one another. Therefore, they both catered to the same type of student intake.

The sole reason to select those schools was one of those schools is adopted by an NGO which is working for the school reforms and they are providing life skills education on a high level with an organized curriculum. The other school is not providing life skills education with a designed curriculum nonetheless, the teachers try their best to teach these skills to the students by solely their end.

This research was on the analysis of life skill education in Pakistani schools. The researcher applied an investigative technique and conducted interviews to attain in-depth data.

#### Data Analysis Technique

For this research, the researcher aimed to analyze data through thematic analysis.

Braun and Clark (2006) stated that “thematic analysis is a method that used for identifying, reporting and analyzing the themes which are present in the collected data” (p. 6). Thematic analysis recognized the evolving themes and appropriate meanings which were based on the understanding of people’s experiences in particular. Erickson (1986) stated, “The basic task of data analysis is to generate assertions that vary in scope and level of inference, largely through induction, and to establish an evidentiary warrant for the assertions one wishes to make” (p.146).

#### Research Instrument

This research was based on the qualitative method and the instrumentation of the research was a semi-structured interview schedule. The respondents answered the questions, asked by the researcher.

### IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that teachers considered the teaching of LSE as an important subject to be taught in elementary classes. The government has not added a sufficient amount of life skills education to the curriculum even after knowing what is going on with our children, they are getting raped and killed. They are depressed for so many reasons, they are getting abused mentally and physically but they don’t know what to do. The government should provide an effective curriculum in which life skills education has a fair share. Teachers should also be there in elementary schools who are qualified for teaching life skills education.

Life skills education worldwide has gained immense attention for the curriculum and course developments because it can provide support to the national course outline for making it child-friendly, equity-driven, and

fulfills children's everyday needs (Care, Kim, Anderson & Gustafsson-Wright, 2017)

1. It is highly recommended that skill knowledge should be provided in schools alongside the standard course outline to prepare children for practical life in the real world. It should not burden the children with excess knowledge rather adjust within the curriculum and assess on the same grounds.

2. The government should develop strong guidelines on life skill education that can support the addition of skills education and its evaluation within the school and education systems.

3. The government should play its vital role in establishing and enriching school-based HIV education along with sexual and reproductive life skill knowledge in generalized population so that it can prevent HIV and stigma among young and vulnerable populations in concentrated populations.

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