

EMPOWERMENT OF TRIBAL ADOLESCENTS THROUGH LIFE SKILL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

During the 21st century, globally life is underlying significant transition and change. Among the most affected are the adolescents. Technological advances have made the world a global village. Technology also has made adolescents more dependent on the parents economically than in the agriculture era. Life skill based education focuses on the development of knowledge, attitude and skills. They support people/children for taking a greater responsibility of their own lives. It also helps children to develop and strengthen their interpersonal and psychosocial capabilities for life skills. This study was an attempt to impart life skill education in order to empower the tribal adolescents from a selected community.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the transition stage from childhood to adulthood. Adolescents acquire new skills, attain mastery over environment, learn to handle new responsibility and gain control over one's emotions and thoughts (Nair, 2001). Certain inbuilt buffers of the society both as support and control are no longer available to the adolescents of today, for instance extended family system, the smaller community that is personal and closed, be it a village or religious community uniform culture in the smaller circle of living traditional ways of thinking behaviour with very little individual need to exercise choices (Elder, 2002). The stress faced by adolescents in such a situation is enormous. This is increased by the rising suicide rates and growing crime among young persons. It is essential that the youth be helped to develop skills inherited to handle a wide variety of choices and stressors, the value of the individual which would enable him/her to be stable amidst rapid transition (Santrock, 2001). So it is essential to teach adolescents about life skills.

Life skill based education focuses on the development of knowledge, attitude and skills. They support people/children for taking a greater responsibility of their own lives. It also helps children to develop and strengthen their interpersonal and psychosocial capabilities for life skills. Examples of interpersonal and psycho-social capabilities are assertion,

negotiation, empathy building and stress coping skills. Life skills based education addresses real life application of knowledge, attitudes and skills and makes use of participatory and interactive teaching and learning methods. Life skill based education gives room for children to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills together that they can use in life situation. It also gives the opportunity to the children to clarify uncertainties, to try out new knowledge and skills, to be creative and to learn from each other.

The tribes or adivasis of Kerala are reminiscence of timeless tradition and culture of its civilization. According to the census report 2001 there are 3.64 lakh people belonging to the scheduled tribe [ST] community in Kerala which is 1.14 percent of the population. The tribals are still backward considering the state averages on several counts.

Kerala holds the pride of owing the highest position in human development and high standard of living but the tribal population in Kerala does not come anywhere in the scenario. The government is trying immensely to include them in the developmental string by introducing programmes and the like as they are considered to be the most vulnerable section in the society. However these have not yet proved successful to the mark. As it well said that a society can instill changes and development only when the persons/people involved are willing to change. This study entitled „Life Skill Education and Enrichment for Tribal Adolescents“ therefore attempted to enrich the adolescents of tribal population with life skills. This in turn would develop in the competence and the willingness to come up in life and thereby instigate in them a desire to reach out for opportunities which are already available at their door step. The following were the objectives of the study were to trace the socio economic characteristics of tribal adolescence, develop a manual on life skills and impart life skill education to the selected adolescents.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The area selected for the study was Attapady in Palakkad district. This area is selected for the programme because Attapady holds large number of tribes than any other area in Kerala. Tribal adolescents need life skill education because most of them are prone to various abuses. The sample selected for the study comprised of 12 adolescents, it included 9 boys and 3 girls in the age group of 13-18 years. The sample was randomly selected from a tribal group called “Irular” with the help of AHADS [Attapady Hills Area and Development Society). The method used for the selection of sample was purposive sampling. The tool used for the present study was a questionnaire and a booklet on life skills. For preparing the booklet relevant information was collected from books, internet and experts in the field of “life skill education” the booklet included information about various aspects of life skills, games used in life skill education and a power point presentation about life skills and its significance among adolescents. To conduct the study the investigator visited the area to find out the level of make awareness of the subjects. A questionnaire was prepared to collect background information and a booklet was prepared from relevant sources on life skill education. The sessions were conducted on two consecutive days. On the first day the investigator explained about life skills to the subjects and how it helps them to know better about themselves and the

investigator built a rapport with them. On the second day there were 10 sessions including games and puzzles. Sessions mainly were based on the self-concept, goals in life, and creative thinking. The questionnaire was distributed to the subjects to elicit background information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background Information

The background information of the subjects studied is given in table 1.

Table 1 Background Information

Sl no.	Particulars	Responses (n=11)
1	Age.(years)	
	13-15	
	Boys	5
	Girls	3
15-17	Boys	3
	Girls	Nil
2	Sex	
	Girls	3
	Boys	8
3	Occupation of parents	
	Daily wages	10
	Other	1
4	Income(Rs)	
	Up to 3000	10
	3000and above	1
5	Educational status of parents	
	S.S.L.C and above	2
	Up to 10 th	9
6	Number of hostlers	5

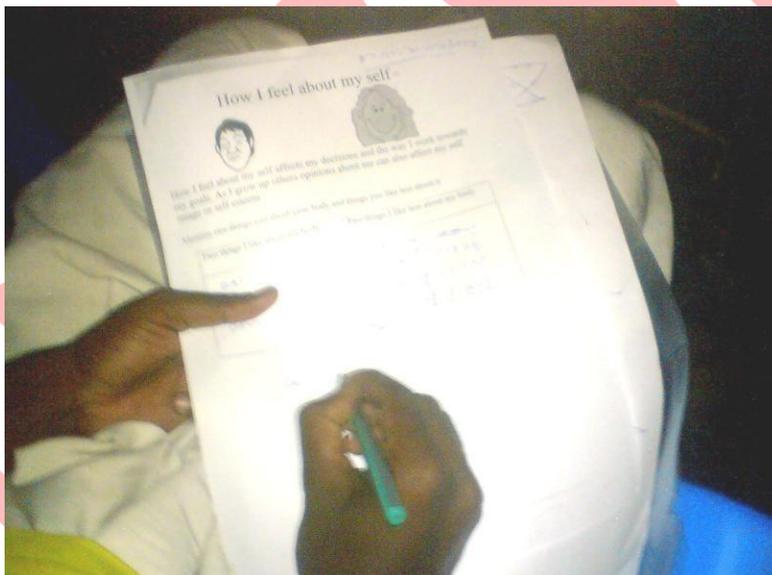
From the above table it can be observed that nearly half of the children belonged to the age group of 13-15 years and the study comprised of eight boys and three girls totally. The majority of the children's parents were found to be daily wage workers. Ninety nine percent of the children studied belonged middle income groups. Majority of the parents (9) had not completed S.S.L.C and above.

Out of the eleven subjects five were staying in the hostel. Since their upper primary class they started to stay in the hostel. All the subjects liked their hostel. According to the subjects they got more leisure time and had more friends in hostel. They used to go home only once in a month. They have facility of services like counseling, personality development classes etc. in the hostel.

PERFORMANCE OF THE SELECTED RESPONDENTS IN VARIOUS ACTIVITIES

- **How I feel about myself?**

The aim of this activity was to impart knowledge about self-esteem and it took around 15-20 minutes for conducting the same. This particular question being a very important one determines the way one forms an opinion about oneself and the way one works towards one's goals. Other's opinion about oneself also can affect self-image or self-esteem. The investigator gave the respondents a sheet on which they had to write what they felt about themselves. There were two columns in which the subjects were asked to write about two things they disliked about the body.



It was interesting to note that all the girls (3) wrote that they liked lean body. This shows that they were as figure conscious as the urban adolescents. They also showed interest towards „size zero figure“. Most of the boys (5) liked to have a good physique and hair. They also disliked gaining weight. Almost all the subjects like their fingers. From the above data it was observed that everyone had an idea about their physique, image and appearance. The subjects who wrote more about positive things were self-confident. According to Harter (2006) self-esteem is correlated more strongly with physical appearance than scholastic competence, social acceptance, behavioral conduct and athletic competence. This association between perceived physical appearances is not confined to adolescents but holds across the life span from early childhood through middle age.

- **What's in my name?**

The aim of this activity was to create an awareness about concept of name which took 20 minutes. The investigator gave a printed sheet and asked the respondents to fill the sheet which included questions about name, its meaning, and name in two different languages. The investigator gave five minutes to fill the sheet.



Children involved in group discussion

Everyone participated actively in this discussion. They liked to talk more about their name, their concept, their dream name etc. This was a question which asked the respondents to write about one thing which they did not like about their name, but everyone misunderstood this question and wrote their pet's name. There was another question which asked who named them. Out of the eleven subjects eight wrote "grandparents" which shows the influence of grandparents in their life than other people. Most of them chose the name because of spiritual reason and every one had a dream name in mind. From the above data it is clear that the subjects were aware about the name, identity and its importance. Their names reflected their culture and religious beliefs because everyone had a name related to God or mythology.

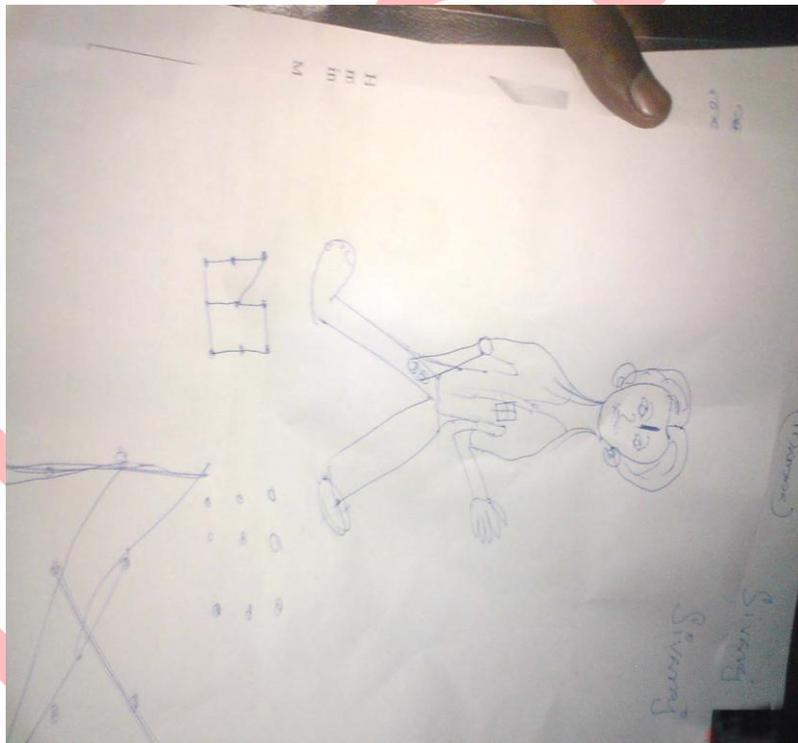
- **My abilities**

The aim of this activity was to impart knowledge about self-esteem and it took 20 minutes. Everyone has some abilities. It is important that each person knows what abilities he/she possessed. When one identifies one's own potentials, one feels proud of them. When one's potentials are recognized by another one feels very happy about it. The investigator asked the subjects to list down their abilities under one heading, "my abilities" within ninety seconds.

Two participants did not write anything; while among the other respondents who participated, every boy wrote they had abilities in sports and games. Girls wrote dancing and cooking. In the discussion session the investigator made them aware that everyone has some abilities or the other. From the data obtained it is interpreted that ninety percent of the respondents believed that they had some abilities but they only wrote down some abilities like dance, sports games etc. After the discussion on their particular session they learnt things which they never count as ability. For example abilities thinking, speaking, listening, seeing etc.

- **My picture**

The aim of this activity was to impart knowledge about self-esteem and it took 25 minutes. Most of the people were unaware about their body system. Everyone was only concerned about the defects if any. This has created a low self-esteem in them and they have not been able to face others with strength.



A sketch done by a subject

In this session the investigator distributed blank sheets and asked them to draw a picture. The investigator put them in a suspense for a few minutes to create interest and finally told them to draw a picture of their own. The facilitator gave them three minutes for drawing. This session was interesting because everyone drew the picture and they passed on comments with each other. After completing the picture the investigator asked them to close their eyes and went on naming various parts of the body and the participants were asked to touch accordingly. After this the investigator asked them to draw the picture again without

looking into the first picture. After completing the second picture the investigator asked them to compare the two pictures. The investigator was successful in creating an awareness about the body system. Most of the persons have been told in their childhood only about the defects in their body system like that they were short or did not have a well cut nose or they were dark etc. These comments had already created a low self-esteem in them.

- **Write how you feel about each of these comments**

The aim of this activity was to create an awareness about gender roles. The investigator distributed printed sheets which contained some comments such as

- Boys should sit properly
- Boys can also cry
- Girls must look after their parents when they grow old
- Boys must help in household works
- Boys should be loving and caring
- Girls should be bold and courageous
- Boys should be gentle and sensitive
- Only boys should fight for the rights
- Girls should speak softly

The students were asked to write their opinion on the same.



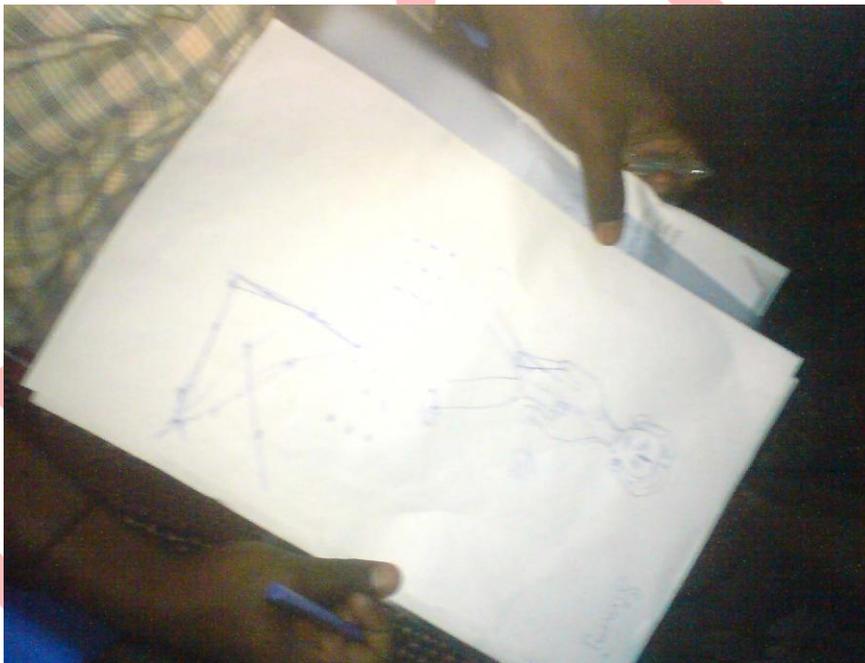
Discussion session on gender role

The respondents filled it with great interest. Boys responded positively to some comments which gave importance to them. In the discussion session they showed a tendency to form two groups, but the investigator did not allow it. All the respondents agreed with

comments like girls should be bold and courageous, boys should be loving and caring etc. Eight respondents agreed with comments that boys can also cry. Eighty percent of the respondents agreed with comments boys must help in the household works. From the above data it is interpreted that the respondents were aware about gender roles. Their dignity towards females was not well seen and it was different from urban people.

- **Nine spots**

The aim of this activity was to create an awareness about problem solving and setting of goals. In the present session the investigator wanted to give a learning situation about goals in life and stressed that everyone should have goals. There are two types of goals namely short term goals and long term goals. The subjects shared their goals with the investigator, but seventy percent of them are usually not sure about achieving their goals. The investigator gave a puzzle. In the puzzle the children had to draw nine spots, 3 in each row, join all nine points in four straight lines without lifting the pen after starting the first line. One may go across a line but should not retrace over any line.



Children completing a puzzle

Only two subjects did it correctly. They demonstrated the correct method of doing it to everyone. The lesson obtained from these sessions was that there is nothing impossible but there can be a breakthrough. By being out of the way everyone can be successful if one sets a goal one can reach it through many ways. While one structure is being broken another should be built. These points were discussed by the respondents. The investigator moderated the discussion in a manner in which all the above points were called out.

It is clear that they were aware about many things, including self-concept, goal and self-discovery. The selected subjects were well aware about their living situations. They were

very much similar to rural adolescents. Their background characters are as similar to rural people. The selected subjects show confidence in their life. They are ready to accept the challenges in life. The package on life skill was quite effective in enriching the life skill of the selected tribal adolescents.

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