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Enhancing Life skills -Self Awareness- in Students with intellectual disability.

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Abstract Background: Life skills are essential for adaptive and positive behavior, enabling individuals to deal effectively with daily challenges. For children with intellectual disabilities, developing self-awareness—a core life skill—is particularly crucial for personal, social, and emotional well-being. However, limited research exists on structured interventions to enhance self-awareness in this population within the Indian special education context.This study aimed to examine the impact of a structured Self Awareness Programme (implemented as an Individualized Education Program) on the self-awareness levels of students with intellectual disabilities studying in special schools.

An experimental research design (single group pre-test – post-test) was employed. A sample of 100 students with intellectual disabilities was selected from four special schools under the Madhya Pradesh Vikalang Sahayata Samiti (MPVSS) across Rajgarh, Shajapur, Agar-Malwa, and Ujjain districts. A self-developed Self Awareness Scale was used for assessment. The intervention consisted of a 20-skill Individualized Education Program (IEP) tailored to each student's needs and ability level. Mean, standard deviation, and a paired t-test were used for statistical analysis.

The pre-test mean score for self-awareness was 71.00 (SD = 8.69), while the post-test mean score after the intervention was 85.54 (SD = 7.32). The calculated t-value was 9.78 (df = 49), which is significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates a statistically significant improvement in self-awareness following the intervention.

Conclusion: The findings demonstrate that a well-planned, individualized Self Awareness Programme significantly enhances self-awareness among children with intellectual disabilities. The study recommends the integration of structured life skills programs, focusing on self-awareness, into the special education curriculum.

Keywords: Self-awareness, Intellectual Disability, Life Skills Education, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Special Education, MPVSS.

1.0 Introduction- *Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.(1)*

Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (World Health Organization [WHO], 1997). Described in this way, the range of skills that can be considered life skills is vast, and their nature and definition are likely to differ across cultures and settings. However, analysis of the life skills field suggests that a core set of skills lies at the heart of skills-based initiatives for promoting the health and well-being of all children, including those with disabilities.In 1997, WHO produced a publication to provide guidance on life skills education for children and adolescents in schools, in which life skills are described as promoting psychosocial competence. "Psychosocial competence is a person's ability to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. It is a person's ability to maintain a state of mental well-being and to demonstrate this in adaptive and positive behavior while interacting with others, his/her culture and environment" (World Health Organization, 1997, p. 1).

Life skill education is a very important aspect of education for both special and general school students. Life skills help an adolescence to become a responsible and proactive member of the society and the Nation. Life skill

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education helps a person to face the challenging life situations with confidence and courage. One has to take proper and best decisions in life even in the critical and challenging life situations. One may have to face failures also and should learn how to make the failures a step to better success. One should gain the ability to find the proper and best solutions to the worst and critical life situations. Life skills are to be accrued for the holistic development of a person.

(WHO) On the basis of an analysis of the life skills research field, WHO suggested 10 core skills: decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, empathy, coping with emotions, and coping with stresses (World Health Organization, 1997) which are also useful in the field of disability.

In 1997, WHO produced a seminal publication to provide guidance on life skills education for children and adolescents in schools, describing life skills as promoting psychosocial competence. "Psychosocial competence is a person's ability to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. It is a person's ability to maintain a state of mental well-being and to demonstrate this in adaptive and positive behavior while interacting with others, his/her culture and environment" (WHO, 1997, p. 1).

Life skill education is a critical component of education for both general and special school students. It helps adolescents become responsible and proactive members of society. Life skill education equips a person to face challenging life situations with confidence and courage, make proper and best decisions even in critical situations, learn from failures, and find solutions to adverse circumstances. On the basis of an analysis of the life skills research field, WHO suggested 10 core skills: decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, empathy, coping with emotions, and coping with stresses (WHO, 1997). Among these, self-awareness forms the foundation upon which other skills are built.

2.0 Life Skill Education and students with intellectual disabilities (special needs)

The education provided to the students is named as special education. Special education means specially designed education suitable to the needs of students with special educational needs. The right for persons with disability defines intellectual disability " a condition characterized by significant limitation both in intellectual functioning (Reasoning, learning, problem solving,) and in adaptive behavior which covers a range of every day social and practical skills including specific learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders" in our surroundings it is found that it is on priority that special students should know about themselves. Life Skill Education and Students with Intellectual Disabilities The education provided to students with special needs is termed special education, which is designed to meet their unique requirements. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwD) defines intellectual disability as "a condition characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills." In the context of special education, it is a priority that students develop an understanding of themselves—their strengths, weaknesses, preferences, and emotions. Self-awareness is the starting point for developing independence, self-advocacy, and social integration.

3.0 Objectives of the studies

To study and compare the impact of life skill program on special students on the basis of pre test and post test mean score of self awareness.

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4.0 Sample for the study- The population of this study was the students with intellectual disability studying in the special schools of Madhya Pradesh Vikalang Sahayata Samiti. Special schools were from the following districts of Madhya Pradesh; Ujjain.

5.0 Methodology- The present research is an experimental research. The samples are from the students with intellectual disabilities. In this research work Single group pre test -post test design is used. This research design is justified because of the particular nature of the population from which the samples are selected. The population is comparatively small and the learning level is low In case of students with intellectual disabilities only a small portion of children with intellectual disabilities are going to school.

5.1 Tools used-The researcher assessed and evaluated the self awareness with the help of self developed Self Awareness Scale.

5.2 Self Awareness Programme-Individualized Education Program (IEP)

The life skill education program was made as Individualized Educational program. IEP is prepared for each student with intellectual Disability. This helped the researcher to make proper planning for each individual. There were 20 skills selected which were modified for each students as per their needs and ability.

6.0 Statistical technique used -

In the present study Mean, SD and‘t’ test and Graphical representation are used.

7.0 Results-

The objective of the present research paper is to study the impact of Life Skill Program on Special Students of MPVSS on the basis of Pre Test and Post Test mean score of Self Awareness. Data related to this objective was analyzed and mean SD and‘t’ value are computed. Result is given in the Table 7.1.

Table 1 Mean scores and SD of the Pre Test and Post Test scores

Variables	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**
Pre Test	100	71.00	8.69
Post Test	100	85.54	7.32

Table 1 shows that the mean scores of Pre Test and Post Test of the Self Awareness of the special students with intellectual disability. The Pre- Test mean score is 71.00 and Post Test mean score is 85.54. There is a clear variation in the mean score of the post test after the intervention. The post test mean score is significantly higher than the pre test mean score.

The researcher used the‘t’ Test to analyze the mean score of Pre Test and Post Test. The results are shown in the Table 2, ‘t’ value together with mean and SD.

Table 2 Mean, SD, and ‘t’ value of Pre Test and Post Test

Variables	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**‘t’ value**
Pre Test – Self Awareness score	100	71.00	8.69	9.78**
Post Test – Self Awareness score	100	85.54	7.32	
**Significance area .01	*df*= 49			

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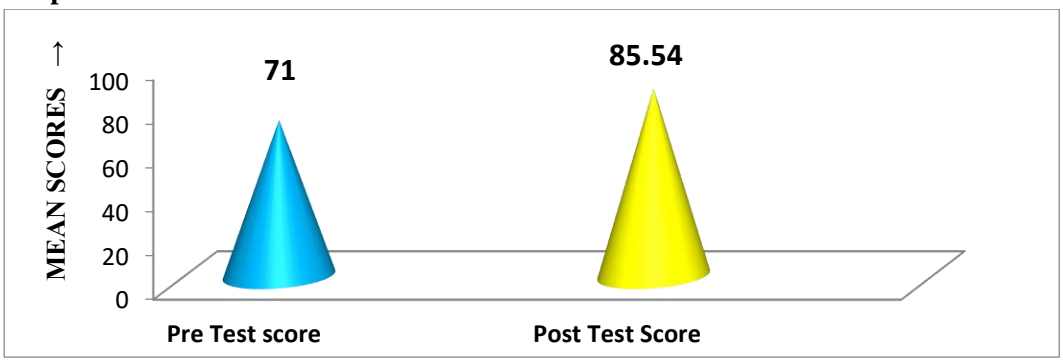
Table no. 2 is showing that't' value is 9.78 which is significant at .01 area having *df* = 49. 't' value is indicating that the difference between score of Pre Test and Post Test of Self Awareness is significant. On this basis the hypothesis that is there will be no significant impact of Life Skill program (treatment) on the special students of MPVSS on the bases of Pre Test and Post Test is rejected. The values are indicating that Self Awareness program is effective.

The above result is shown in Graph1. This graphic presentation clearly shows the result is significant

Graph 1 Pre Test and Post Test score – Self Awareness Life skill



The above Graph1 shows the impact of treatment on the special students with Intellectual Disability. The graph shows clearly that there is a significant impact of the life skill program for the students with intellectual disability.

The researcher investigated again in deep in different areas of in Personal, Social and Emotional area.

Limitations of the Study

While the present study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of a Self Awareness Programme for students with intellectual disabilities, the following limitations must be acknowledged. These limitations pertain to the research design, sample characteristics, measurement tools, intervention fidelity, and external validity. Recognizing these limitations is essential for accurate interpretation of the findings and for guiding future research

1.The study employed a single-group pre-test – post-test design without a control or comparison group

2.No Long-Term Follow-Up Assessment. The study measured outcomes immediately after the completion of the 12-week intervention (post-test). No follow-up assessment was conducted to evaluate the maintenance or long-term retention of self-awareness skills. It is unknown whether the gains observed were sustained over time (e.g., 3 months, 6 months, or 1 year after the intervention) or whether they diminished without continued reinforcement.

8.0 Conclusion- It was concluded that the systematically planned and implemented life skill program (Self Awareness Programme) significantly improved the self-awareness of children with intellectual disability. The post-test scores were markedly higher than the pre-test scores, and the statistical analysis ($t = 9.78$, $p < 0.01$) confirmed that this difference was not due to chance. The maximum gain was observed in the personal awareness domain.The study reinforces the importance of structured, individualized life skills education as an integral part of the special education curriculum. It is recommended that special schools adopt similar IEP-based life skill programs to foster psychosocial competence in their students. The findings also have implications for teacher training institutions, which should include life skills education methods in their pre-service and in-service training programs for special educators.Finally, the study contributes to the growing body of evidence that children with intellectual disabilities can learn and develop core life skills when provided with appropriate, individualized, and evidence-based interventions. Self-awareness is not only teachable but also forms the foundation for greater independence, self-advocacy, and quality of life.

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