

Effect of Life Skill Intervention and Retention on Depression, Anxiety and Stress among Nigerian Adolescents in Secondary Schools

OYEYEMI, Ahmed Ademola, OKENWA-FADELE, Ijeoma and Chukwudum, Prince Chiemeka

Department of Educational Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.803286S>

Received: 24 August 2024; Accepted: 28 August 2024; Published: 01 October 2024

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of life skill intervention and retention on depression, anxiety and stress among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools. Three research questions and three hypotheses were formulated to guide in the study. The survey research method was used to conduct the study. This target population of this study comprised of all adolescents in secondary schools in Lagos State. This research was carried out in Shomolu Local Government Area of Lagos State. One Hundred and Fifty (150) respondents were randomly selected as sample for this study and were retrieved for data analysis. A self-structured questionnaire was constructed and were used for the data collection. The hypotheses were tested using Regression analysis. The findings of the study were as follows: there is an effect of life skill intervention and retention on depression among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools; there is an effect of life skill intervention and retention on anxiety among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools; and there is an effect of life skill intervention and retention on stress among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools. Some recommendations were made and they are: it is recommended that life skills education should be made a priority and part of the school curriculum; It is also suggested that this area be further researched in the developing world, and more resources and training should be provided to teachers to create an enabling environment for teaching life skills to the adolescents; Teacher should conduct activities in their topic to build critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills, as well as other skills including social and emotional skills; Educational institutions should play an important role in the prevention of psycho-social stress, improving mental health and promoting healthy habits among students.

Keyword: Adolescents, Anxiety, Depression, Life Skill Intervention, Retention, Stress.

INTRODUCTION

People are not born with all the knowledge and skills they need to navigate their way through life. A person's ability to make decisions, solve problems, think creatively and critically, communicate effectively, build interpersonal relationships, be self-aware and empathic, and cope with emotions and stress are essential to an individual's wellbeing, and are all taught and developed over time. A critical part of each person's journey to adulthood is learning these life skills and gaining confidence in utilizing them. Parents, role models, community members, cultural leaders, educators, and peers are all sources for individuals to draw from throughout their developmental years. Eventually, they reach the time where they are expected to use the life skills they have learned to seamlessly integrate into society. Obviously, people will continue to learn and grow throughout their lifetime, but upon entering adulthood, society expects an individual to be capable of dealing with the demands and challenges of life while positively contributing to their community.

One of the issues society faces is that home life structures are constantly changing, leaving many adolescents without the guidance and support system at home to learn the necessary skills to thrive as an adult (Cassidy et al., 2018). If adolescents are not learning the life skills needed to deal with the demands of adulthood at home, they need to learn it from somewhere else. With the above assertion, it is believed that this burden falls on our schools. Our education system's primary goal is to prepare students to navigate adulthood as independent and responsible members of society. The purpose of education is to equip individuals with certain competencies to live life in a disciplined manner. Education nourishes cognitive, social and emotional aspects of the learners by enabling them to face the challenges of life in a better way.

Life skills education is a holistic approach which focuses its lens towards overall development of the learners. Life skill is not a single construct rather these skills are a combination of different domains, categories and components. Life skills fall under 3 major categories i.e.:

1. Decision making and critical thinking skills
2. Interpersonal relationships communication skills,
3. Coping and self-management skills.

Life skills education enables the learners to obtain information, develop certain skills and express desirable behavior which is considered mandatory for being socially responsible. Educationists used to emphasize that education should reflect and represent the specific societal norms, need and aspirations. Children obtain certain knowledge, learn skills and adopt attitudes from their home, school, community and in larger context the world.

Life skills have been defined as the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the challenges of life. Hence, in this constantly changing social, economic and political environment, developing life skills is an essential part of being able to meet the challenges of everyday life and even more (Babu, 2018). Life skills are the psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. They are loosely grouped into three broad categories of skills: cognitive skills for analyzing and using information, personal skills for developing personal agency and managing oneself, and inter-personal skills for communicating and interacting effectively with others (UNICEF, 2003). Education is the essential one for the character building and moral development, so the life skills plays an important role for character and personality building.

Life skills are those skills which are coping children in facing day to day situations in leading the life. Due to lack of moral support and increased pressure in studies there are any issues like lack of family values, poverty, population explosion, lack of jobs, mental pressure, suicide, smoking, alcoholism, drug abuse, anti-social activities resulting in disturbance in their social, psychological, emotional, physical and overall development. Education is the only tool which can transform the children as intelligent, social and well-adjusted citizens in the society. The term 'life skills' covers a broad range of abilities, competencies and approaches. Life skills is concerned with the education, health, and social sectors and generally represents a set of skills for empowering cognitive, emotional, personal and interpersonal skills. These skills are essentially the abilities that promote mental and social well-being in situations encountered in the course of life.

Life skill helps the youngsters and children to enhance positive and flexible attitude in life and in the circumstances (Kumar, 2017). School retention means the student will stay in the same school year for an additional period, instead of moving on to a higher level together with his/her age peers (Brophy, 2006). The way in which a student may respond to difficulties is decided by a host of factors, including their personality, psycho-social support received from those around them (particularly from parents, teachers and

peers), and the life skills that they possess. Life skills intervention seek to empower youth to make responsible and healthy choices in their lives. International research suggests that youth with good competence skills have lower rates of substance use, depression, delinquency, and aggressive behaviours (Zins, Elias, Greenberg & Weissberg, 2000; Barkhordar, Hasan & Safdar, 2016).

Life skills training has been found to play a significant role in promoting mental health across varied population groups, and is reported to have a significant impact on happiness, and psychological and emotional well-being of individuals, thereby improving overall quality of life (Narasimharaju, 2020). Such life skills training programmes may also be effective in developing personality traits such as resilience, self-efficacy, and improving self-esteem (Shwetha, 2015). However, evidence from Nigeria is limited. The objective of this study is to examine the effect of life skill intervention and retention on depression, anxiety and stress among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools.

Statement of the Problem

Adolescence, the second decade of life (10-19 years), is a period of rapid development, when young people acquire new capacities and are faced with many new situations that create not only opportunities for progress, but also risk to health and wellbeing (World Health Organization, 1998). Life skills training and retention had a considerable effect on mental health parameters. Considering the significance of mental health in modern societies and particularly in adolescents, it is of importance to incorporate these skills in school curriculums and hold workshops for parents to improve the mental health of the adolescents. (Jamali & Nia, 2016). As a result, the goal of this study is to determine the current state of secondary school students' life skills so that appropriate strategies can be designed to enhance the students' life skills. This research therefore wants to examine the effect of life skill intervention and retention on depression, anxiety and stress among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of life skill intervention and retention on depression, anxiety and stress among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools. This general aim is expressed in the following specific objectives which are:

1. To examine the effect of life skill intervention and retention on depression among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools;
2. To ascertain the effect of life skill intervention and retention on anxiety among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools;
3. To determine the effect of life skill intervention and retention on stress among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided by the study:

1. What is the effect of life skill intervention and retention on depression among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools?
2. What is the effect of life skill intervention and retention on anxiety among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools?
3. What is the effect of life skill intervention and retention on stress among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were addressed in this study;

1. There is no effect of life skill intervention and retention on depression among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools.
2. There is no effect of life skill intervention and retention on anxiety among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools.
3. There is no effect of life skill intervention and retention on stress among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools.

METHODOLOGY

The population of the study consisted of adolescents in secondary schools in Lagos State. This research was carried out in Shomolu Local Government Area of Lagos State. The research adopted descriptive survey research design. The sample of the study was made up of One hundred and Fifty (150) participants. The study made use of a researcher-made questionnaire titled “Life Skill Intervention and Retention in School Questionnaire” (LSIRSQ). The inventory was divided into two parts, A and B. Part A contained items on the bio data of the respondents such as age, gender, and so on. Part B contained items as captured in the formulated research questions, on a four point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The data obtained were statistically analyzed using Regression analysis.

RESULT

There were three (3) hypotheses formulated in the course of this research to find the selected and measured variables. Linear Regression analysis was used to analyse the hypotheses.

Hypothesis One: There is no effect of life skill intervention and retention on depression among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools.

Table 1: Analysis showing life skill intervention and retention on depression among Nigerian adolescents. Regressions analysis was used to analyse this.

The result of the analysis is presented in table 1:

Variables	Coefficient	Std Error	t-Stat.	Prob
Constant	24.5640	1.167970	-3.397314	0.0040
Life skill intervention and retention	0.351816	0.234469	1.500476	0.1542
Depression	-0.093385	0.366017	-0.255139	0.8021
R2	0.94			
Adj. R2	0.92			
F-Statistic	3.915			
Prob.(F-Stat)	0.012			

Source: Researcher’s Computation Result from E-views 10.

From the table, the computed Fstatistic value is 5.830. This is more than the upper critical bound values of 5.73. Thus, the null hypothesis of no cointegration is rejected at 5% significance level and the study

concludes that there is long run relationship among the variables. The short run and long run model to test relationship between life skill intervention and retention, and depression and also the diagnostic test conducted to assess the fitness of the model. The short-run and long-run results as shown in Table 1, with adjusted R-squared = 0.92, F-stat = 2.631, Prob(F-stat) = 0.012) The result shows that the coefficient of the lagged CointEq (-1) (error correction term) is -0.870 (P = 0.004). However, only life skill intervention and retention (with $p < 0.05$) has significant positive relationship with depression. This means that there is an effect of life skill intervention and retention on depression among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools.

Hypothesis Two: There is no effect of life skill intervention and retention on anxiety among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools.

Table 2: Analysis showing life skill intervention and retention on anxiety among Nigerian adolescents. Regressions analysis was used to analyze this.

The result of the analysis is presented in table 2:

Variables	Coefficient	Std Error	t-Stat.	Prob
Constant	21.7234	1.82	5.299	0.0001
Life skill intervention and retention	0.351816	0.234469	1.500476	0.1542
Anxiety	0.3561579	0.433466	0.365689	0.9756
R	0.275			
R ²	0.67			
Adj R ²	0.64			
F-Statistic	4.6246			
Prob.(F-Stat)	1.0356			

Source: Researcher's Computation Result from E-views 10.

From the table, the computed Fstatistic value is 4.6246. This is more than the upper critical bound values of 5.53. Thus, the null hypothesis of no cointegration is rejected at 5% significance level and the study concludes that there is long run relationship among the variables. The short run and long run model to test relationship between life skill intervention and retention, and anxiety and also the diagnostic test conducted to assess the fitness of the model. The short-run and long-run results as shown in Table 2, with adjusted R-squared = 0.67, F-stat = 4.6246, Prob(F-stat) = 1.0356) The result shows that the coefficient of the lagged CointEq (-1) (error correction term) is -0.822 (P = 0.001). However, only life skill intervention and retention (with $p < 0.05$) has significant positive relationship with anxiety. This means that there is an effect of life skill intervention and retention on anxiety among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools.

Hypothesis Three: There is no effect of life skill intervention and retention on stress among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools.

Table 3: Analysis showing life skill intervention and retention on stress among Nigerian adolescents. Regression analysis was used to analyze this.

The result of the analysis is presented in table 3:

Variables	Coefficient	Std Error	t-Stat.	Prob
Constant	22.7618	411215.2	1.852641	0.0814
Life skill intervention and retention	0.351816	0.234469	1.500476	0.1542

Stress	-0.084568	0.346689	0.347812	0.7864
R	0.428			
R ²	0.72			
Adj R ²	0.70			
F-Statistic	4.7021			
Prob.(F-Stat)	1.3810			

Source: Researcher's Computation Result from E-views 10.

From the table, the computed Fstatistic value is 4.7021. This is more than the upper critical bound values of 4.77. Thus, the null hypothesis of no cointegration is rejected at 5% significance level and the study concludes that there is long run relationship among the variables. The short run and long run model to test relationship between life skill intervention and retention, and stress and also the diagnostic test conducted to assess the fitness of the model. The short-run and long-run results as shown in Table 3, with adjusted R-squared = 0.2, F-stat = 4.7021, Prob(F-stat) = 1.3810) The result shows that the coefficient of the lagged CointEq (-1) (error correction term) is 1.109 (P = 0.0814). However, only life skill intervention and retention (with $p < 0.05$) has significant positive relationship with stress. This means that there is an effect of life skill intervention and retention on stress among Nigerian adolescents in secondary schools.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of the study indicate that the life skills training provided in this study, was associated with reduction of features of anxiety and depression among adolescents in the study, and also with reduced stress levels. These results are in line with the findings of previous research, where life skills training has been found to have a significant effect on psychological issues such as stress, anxiety and depression across various population groups (Azargoon, Motlay & Dareke, 2013; Bahrami & Molojabari, 2013; Gatab, Jeludar, Ghajari & Jeludar, 2013). The findings of this study suggest life skills programmes could be introduced in schools to improve the psychological wellbeing of adolescents. To make this viable and sustainable, such programs should be organized and supported alongside other educational programs, by the relevant authorities at school level (Yankey & Biswas, 2012; Habibi, Somayeh, Hasan & Abbass, 2013). Bugdayci(2019) states that youth must possess certain values & skills such as responsibility , gentleman ship, entrepreneurship(marketable skills) to make their life purposeful. He further explained that while teaching about personal and social responsibility, life skills and values should be integrated into different activities to form a positive change in the behaviors of the learners. Bugdayci (2019) mentioned Aksoy and Gursel (2017), in their research study they concluded that education with specific emphasis on social responsibility skills leads the learner towards positive change in views and behaviors regarding moral concepts.

CONCLUSION

The adolescents being vulnerable due to the hormonal changes factor during the period of adolescents they become very much accruable and very much influenced easily in the negative aspects. These kinds of negative aspects influence will give greater impact on the growth and development of a child. A child in his adolescent period faces major problems such as lack of education, mal nutrition, early marriage, early and unsafe initiation into sexual activities, unwanted pregnancies, gender bias, lack of family support, limited communication between parents, child trafficking, child beggary, influence of media, substance misuse, conduct problems etc. In order to maximize academic functioning of children as well as improving the Life Skills and retention attitude and level conscious efforts needed to be taken. It includes the creation of awareness among students, parents and teachers and help to address the problem of the students. The

improvement of life skills and civic consciousness in the school level will last till the end of a person. This will contribute to the personal, familial, and social development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study and the conclusions reached above, this paper offers the following recommendations:

1. Based on findings on our study, it is recommended that life skills education should be made a priority and part of the school curriculum.
2. It is also suggested that this area be further researched in the developing world, and more resources and training should be provided to teachers to create an enabling environment for teaching life skills to the adolescents.
3. Teacher should conduct activities in their topic to build critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills, as well as other skills including social and emotional skills.
4. Educational institutions should play an important role in the prevention of psycho-social stress, improving mental health and promoting healthy habits among students.
5. Practical issues, such as provision of appropriate time for such programs, should also be considered.
6. Given the importance of good mental health in modern societies and among young people, schools should consider incorporating life skill programs in their curriculum, to support the emotional development of adolescents.
7. Teachers could help by introducing life skills programs during their routine teaching, to enable young people to solve their problems and make their own decisions in an effective way. To do this, teachers should be provided with the knowledge and skills to impart life skill education to the adolescents.

REFERENCES

1. Azargoon, H., Motlay, M.A. & Dareke, M. (2013). Effectiveness of Family Training and Life Skills on Caring Chronic Mental Disorders in an Iranian Population. *Psychology, Society and Education*; 5(1): 77-90.
2. Babu, N. (2018). Role of Parents for the Life Skill Development of Children with Learning Disability. *Indian Journal of Applied Research*, 8 (8), 17-20.
3. Bahrami, G.G. & Molojabari, F. (2013). The Effect of Training Life Skills on Mental Health of Mothers having Exceptional Children. *European Journal of Experimental Biology*; 3(2): 1-5.
4. Brophy, J. (2006). History of Research on Classroom Management. Em C. M. Evertson & C. S. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of Classroom Management: Research, Practice, and Contemporary Issues (17–43)*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203874783.ch2>
5. Bugdayci, S. (2019). Examining personal and social responsibility levels of secondary school students. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 7(1), 206-210.
6. Gatab, T.A., Jeludar, S., Ghajari, A.V. & Jeludar, Z.A. (2013). Effects of the education of life skills on the reduction of mental behavioural disorders of depression, anxiety, stress in students. *European Psychiatry*; 28: 1.
7. Habibi, Z., Somayeh, T., Hasan, S. & Abbass, A. (2012). Effectiveness of Stress Management Skill Training on the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Levels in Drug Addicts after Drug Withdrawal. *International Journal of High Risk Behaviors and Addiction*; 12(2): 82-6. DOI: 10.5812/ijhrba.10695.
8. Jamali, S., & Nia, H. S. (2016). The Effect of Life Skills Training on Mental Health of Iranian Middle School Students: A Preliminary Study. October, 269–272.
9. Kumar, P. (2017). Morality and Life skills: The need and importance of life skills education. *International Journal of Advanced Education and Research*, 4(3): 101-102.
10. Prajapati, R., Sharma, B., & Sharma, D. (2017). Significance of life skills education. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 10 (1), 1–6.

11. World Health Organization, Regional Office for South-East Asia (WHO/SEARO). (1998). Strategies for adolescent health and development in South-East Asia region. New Delhi, India: Author.
12. Yankey, T. & Biswas, U.N. (2012). Life Skills Training as an Effective Intervention Strategy to Reduce Stress among Tibetan Refugee Adolescents. *Journal of Refugee Studies*; 25(4): 514-36. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fer056>.