Evaluation of Student's Life Skills in Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences and its Affecting Factors, 2015.

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Life skills are abilities that grow with continued training and prepare the person to face with daily life issues, increasing mental, social and health abilities. The present study aimed to evaluate the student's life skills in Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences and its affecting factors.

Materials and Methods: This was a cross-sectional study. Three hundred and eighty-five students of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences were selected, randomly. Data gathering tool was a standard questionnaire which was including demographic information such as age, gender, degree of education, marital status, level of study, college and 57 questions in 7 areas of life skills. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 20. ANOVA and T test were used to investigate the relationship between the dependent variable and other variables.

Results: The total Mean score of students' life skills was 191.71±20.30. There were no significant differences between gender, college and total score of life skills statistically (P=0.49). There were significant differences between college, problem-solving, decision making (P=0.049) and also creative thinking (P< 0.0001).

Conclusion: The findings showed that the life skills of the students were moderate. In order to improve the life skills of the students establishing workshops and recreational programs are suggested.

Keywords: life skill, self-awareness, behavior, students, university

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Introduction

Life skills means, the ability to perform consistent and positive behavior. Having life skills ability causes person to live with life challenges and do his/her everyday requirements (1). There are ten main life skills, including: self-awareness, effective communication, interpersonal skills, decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, coping with emotions, coping with stress and empathy (2-4). Nelson believed that each component of life kills has three components: knowledge, attitude and skills. He believes that subject must dominate in each of these components and have favorable benefit (5). Teaching these skills, leads to personal and social promotion, human rights protection and psychosocial problems prevention (6).Life skills leads to population mental health, human relations richness and mental health promotion. People who are aware to these skills and applying them would protect themselves and others

from psycho-social risk behaviors such as addiction, domestic and social violence, abusing people particularly children, HIV/AIDS and same others (7).

In a study which was conducted on students of Tehran's universities it was shown that only 43.2% of respondents had life skills good awareness (8). Mahmoudi-Gharaei et al. have revealed that social skills training could improve behavior and feeling in female students compared to before training (9). In another study which was conducted in Uremia, to determine and compare the effectiveness of three life skills in new students (freshmen) there were statistically significant differences between the scores of samples before and after training in all components of public health. The results of the post-test have shown that the training was effective (10). In another study by Khanzadeh et al. life skills training decreased anxiety and aggression among examined students significantly. The impact of life skills training on reducing anxiety was considered .they have suggested that anxiety is the lack of skills and unpredictability position (11). In a study by Valipour khajehghyasi et al. in Mazendaran University of Medical Sciences, they revealed that self-awareness skill had the highest mean score and decision making & problem solving had the lowest mean score. Regarding above mentioned skills there were no significant differences between male and female students (5). The rapid technology development have created many changes in human societies including changes in environmental conditions, interpersonal communication, attitudes, fundamental principles and values and people lifestyle. Students are affected by these changes and in many cases they don't have adequate capacity to deal with these problems .They are exposed to a lot of harms also moral and behavioral anomalies and in some cases, the harms are not irreparable. Having life skills and knowledge acquisition, change attitudes, values and promote appropriate behaviors. People who have life skills while facing these dangers have the ability to behave appropriately and maintain their physical and mental health. Based on above mentioned facts the present study aimed to determine life skills and its affecting factors among students of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences in 2015.

Materials and Methods

This study was a cross-sectional one. The study population was 385 students of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences. The stratified random sampling was used. The questionnaire was consisted of 7 areas including: self-awareness (6 items), Coping with stress (7 items), interpersonal relations (13 items), problem-solving and decision-making (10 items), creative thinking (6 items), critical thinking (6 items) and effective communication (9 items).It was a 5 Likert scale questionnaire; 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for neither agree nor disagree 4 for agree and 5 for strongly agree. The questionnaire was used by previous study and its validity and reliability was confirmed. The questionnaire Cronbach's alpha was 0.78 (5). The lowest and highest scores of this questionnaire are 57 and 285 respectively. The mean score lower than 95 was considered as weak and mean score between 95 and 190 was considered as moderate and the mean score more than 190, was considered as good life skills. For data collection, researchers went to the colleges. In each college, some classes were selected, randomly. After explaining the aim of the study to the students, they were assured of the confidentiality of information. Participating in the study was based on their willingness. Incomplete and defaced questionnaires excluded. The data was analyzed using SPSS 20. Descriptive statistics (frequency, mean,

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standard deviation) and analytical statistics (T-test, One way ANOVA) were used. To compare the mean scores of life skills between two genders, independent-samples T test and to compare life skills mean scores and colleges, One Way ANOVA were used.

Results

The response rate was 100%. The mean age of the students was 21.67±1.92 years. Minimum and maximum ages of the studied samples were 18 and 34 years old, respectively. Total of 253 (65.7%) students were undergraduate and the rest of them were studying at the graduate and upper level. Total of 345 (89.6%) of students were single and the others were married. The respondents were including; 66 (17.1%) from Faculty of Medicine, 66 (17.1%) from Faculty of Paramedical Sciences, 42 (10.9%) from Faculty of Dentistry, 121 (31.4%) from Faculty of Nursing & Midwifery and 90 (23.4%) from School of Health. The highest mean score (3.96±1) was belong to item "I trust my abilities" and the lowest mean score (1.93±1.03) was belong to item "I despise the people who are around me". The highest mean score in 7 areas was related to the field of self-awareness (3.63±0.57) and the lowest (3.10±0.57) was related to the area of coping with stress. The total students' life skills mean score was 191.71±20.30. To investigate the effect of gender on life skills, One Samples T-test was used. There were no significant differences between gender and 7 areas of life skills (*P*=0.49) (Table 1). ANOVA test showed that there were significant differences between college and problem-solving & decision making (*P*=0.049), creative thinking (*P*‹ 0.0001) and critical thinking (*P*=0.02) (Table 2).

Table 1: The mean scores in different areas of life skills the students of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences based on gender, 2015

Life Skills Areas	Mean & S.D	Males	Females	P	T
Self-awareness	3.63±0.57	3.65±0.57	3.62±0.57	0.67	0.43
Coping with stress	3.10±0.57	3.13±0.51	3.10±0.58	0.59	0.54
Interpersonal communications	3.38±0.46	3.36±0.45	3.39±0.46	0.59	-0.53
Problem-solving & decision making	3.17±0.42	3.18±0.37	3.16±0.44	0.67	0.42
Creative thinking	3.43±0.54	3.36±0.65	3.45±0.50	0.12	-1.53
Critical thinking	3.23±0.49	3.27±0.44	3.34±0.51	0.18	-1.33
Effective communication	3.55±0.59	3.49±0.58	3.57±0.59	0.24	-1.18
Total score	3.37±0.35	3.35±0.35	3.38±0.35	0.49	-0.69

Table 2: The mean scores in different areas of life skills the students of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences based on college, 2015

Colleges Life Skills Areas	Medicine	Dentistry	Paramedical	Nursing & Midwifery	Health	F	p
Self-awareness	3.60±0.67	3.67±0.52	3.48±0.47	3.63±0.55	3.68±0.61	1.08	0.37
Coping with stress	3±0.70	3.13±0.55	3.04±0.56	3.17±0.49	3.09±0.56	1.08	0.37
Interpersonal communications	3.36±0.49	3.39±0.41	3.34±0.41	3.39±0.46	3.40±0.51	0.19	0.94
Problem-solving & decision making	3.24±0.47	3.06±0.46	3.11±0.36	3.16±0.39	3.23±0.42	2.34	0.049
Creative thinking	3.56±0.48	3.17±0.62	3.60±0.51	3.42±0.52	3.46±0.49	6.3	‹0.0001
Critical thinking	3.42±0.47	3.19±0.49	3.46±0.42	3.29±0.48	3.35±0.54	3	0.02
Effective communication	3.61±0.55	3.52±0.56	3.59±0.45	3.53±0.63	3.55±0.64	0.3	0.88
Total score	3.40±0.38	3.30±0.37	3.37±0.27	3.37±0.33	3.40±0.36	0.82	0.51

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There were no significant differences between seven areas of life skills and educational level (P▪ 0.05). There were significant differences between marital status and problem-solving & decision making (P=0.01). There were significant differences between field of study and creative thinking (P▪ 0.0001). Also there were significant differences between educational level and coping with stress (P=0.01), age and creative thinking (P=0.001).

Discussion

This study was conducted to evaluate students' life skills in Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences. The findings of present study are in consistent with some studies and also are not in consistent with some. The results of the present study showed that the total score of respondents' life skills was more than 190. This score indicates that respondents' life skills, is higher than moderate. Khushabi et al. in their study have shown that 43.2% of students had a good knowledge on life skills (7).

In another study by Hashemi et al, the mean score of critical thinking and decision-making skills were 3.17 and 3.69, respectively (12). These findings are consistent with our study. Hosseini-Nasab et al. (13) and Zahiboun et al. (14) revealed that the creativity and creative thinking in the studied samples was more than moderate. This finding is consistent with the findings of the present study. The results of the study also showed that the mean score of life skills in students was more than moderate and there were no statistically significant differences between boys and girls. These findings are consistent with the findings of Valipour khajehghyasi et al. in Mazendaran University of Medical Sciences. They have revealed that the mean score of students' life skill was more than moderate and there were no statistically significant differences between mean score of life skills and gender (5).These findings are also in consistent with the results of Moghadam et al. (15) and Khushabi et al. (8).The findings indicate that more attention should be pay to life skills promotion among students. Improving these skills, their ability to solve problems and facing challenges in life and education will increase .Also, high and good skills cause more academic success and prepare them for future life in family, work and social environments. The results of the study showed that there were no statistically significant differences between coping with stress and gender. This finding is against with the results of Valipour khajehghyasi et al. (5). Perhaps this difference is because of the study population. Another reason for this difference may be due to socialization and psychological differences between men and women of the two studies.They revealed that there were statistically significant differences between coping with stress and gender.

McDonogh and Walters, have conducted that compared to men, women have been exposed to more stressful experiences (16). Matud also have pointed to this issue in his study and has expressed that women evaluated events with more stress and compared to men they have been exposed to more stress and coping with stress skills in them was less than men (17) but in our study, there were no statistically significant differences between coping with stress and gender. In this study, it was found that problem-solving and decision-making skills and creative thinking skills of the surveyed students were more than moderate and there were no statistically significant differences between gender and these skills. These findings are consistentwith the findings of the Hashemi et al. (12) and Valipour khajehghyasi et al. (5). The results of the present study revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between boys and girls and creative thinking. This

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finding is consistent with Zahabion et al. (14) and Valipour khajehghyasi et al. (5).

Effective presence in the community leads to creativity. The presence of male and female students in universities is causing to increase their power to analysis and thinking, this factor may destroy creativity between boys and girls (14). The results of this study showed that there were no statistically significant differences between total score of students' life skills and colleges. These findings are consistent with the results of Niazazari et al. (3) and Valipour khajehghyasi et al. (5). The results of the present study showed that there were statistically significant differences between college and problem-solving and decision making (p=0.049), creative thinking (p▪ 0.0001) and critical thinking (p=0.02). These findings are not agree to the results of Moghadam et al. (15), Khushabi et al. (8), Hashemi et al. (12) and Zahabion et al. (14). Bahmani et al. in their studies they have shown that basic sciences have not good critical thinking skills (18). This finding is not consistent with the findings of the present study. This could be due to lack of appropriate conditions for thinking and intellectual favorable environment to develop critical thinking ability (5, 18). The results of Niazazari et al. in Islamic Azad University of Sari Branch have shown that the studied students had appropriate life skills and there were statistically significant differences between gender and life skills mean score. The life skills mean score of female students was more than male students (3). This result is not consistent with the findings of our study.

The positive impact of life skills training and its importance has been considered in most studies. Campo et al. (18), Yedidia et al. (19), Mukohara et al. (20) and Magnani et al. (21) have reported that, the trained students in life skills had better ability and performance. O'Hearn and Gatzhave have expressed the importance of life skills training and have shown that these trainings raise the knowledge and learned skills (22). In a study conducted in one of the high schools in the city of Gorgan by Jalaliaria et al. they revealed that life skills training have increased life satisfactions in the intervention group. There were statistically significant differences between life skills training and increasing life satisfaction in this group (7). In another study by Hajamini et al. the impact of life skills training on the emotional reactions of adolescents is expressed, so that after life skills training, their stress and anxiety levels have reduced (23).

Conclusion

Since, students 'life skills in the present study was moderate, improving these skills during study in university is necessary. To empower students and provide suitable conditions for them to face with the realities of life, establishing workshops and entertainments such as students' tours, music and student celebrations in order to boost the morale of the students is also suggested. In order to make students familiar with these life skills and improving them, life skills courses is recommended for all academic disciplines.

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