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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Impact of Life Skills Education on Adolescents in Rural School

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Abstract

Background: Life Skills refers to "abilities for adoptive and positive behavior that enables an individual to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" like coping with difficulties they face in their personal, emotional and social development. Life Skills Education aims at providing deeper understanding of the life skills especially in the case of adolescents.

Materials and methods: The major objective of the study is to analyse the knowledge of life skills among adolescents and the impact of 'life skills education training on their knowledge level. The study is carried out in the coastal area school in the taluk of Karunagapally, Kerala, India. An experimental study method involving pre- post study is conducted with experiment-delayed group. A sample size of 57 is taken with 30 samples in experimental group and 27 samples in experiment-delayed group.

Results: The experimental and experiment–delayed group were found similar in their socio-demographic status. The study has revealed significant impact of Life Skills Education training on adolescents.

Conclusion: This opens up arena to conduct more research in this field with modifications and contextualization of training modules. Contextualisation needs to cater the needs of the target group especially when it comes to the backward sections of the community.

INTRODUCTION

According to WHO, Life Skills refers to "abilities for adoptive and positive behavior that enables an individual to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (Chaudhary and Mehta 2012). According to UNICEF, "Life Skills" based education is important over numerical and literacy skills. Life skills area is not only linked to the pedagogy of active learning (Leena et al. 2003) but also concerned with addressing the balance between knowledge, attitude and skills (CBSE, 2013).

The cycle of skills development starts with defining and promoting specific skills, promotion of skill acquisition and performance and fostering skill maintenance/generalization (WHO 2005). The World Health Organisation (WHO) categorizes life skills into the following three components (1997):1) Critical thinking skills/Decision-making skills including the skills of Problem solving, Decision making, Critical thinking and Creative thinking, 2) Interpersonal/Communication skills, consisting of Effective communication, Interpersonal skills and Empathy, 3) Coping and self-management skills like Coping with emotions, Coping with stress and Self awareness.

Life skills are identified as a link between motivating factors of knowledge, attitude, values and behaviour reinforcement leading to positive behavior; thus helping in primary prevention of health problems (Weisen et al. 1994). Moreover there is need for reinforcement of the life skills as the family and cultural factors seem no longer

influence the development of young people's mind (Weisen et al. 1994). Parents and teachers also play a major role in strengthening Life skills in children and adolescents (Parthsarathy, Renjith and Shobitha 2009).

A well developed evidence base is observed from studies on the impact of preschool enrichment programmes via improving social skills especially in deprived children.

Life skill education is found to be empowering adolescents from economically backward sections of society also (Sangeeta and Bhamini 2012). Life Skills Education programmes have been adopted to target several objectives among one of the most vulnerable groups in India, adolescent girls. The objectives include the promote awareness of the world around them, create awareness on growing issues, enhance mobility, empower to express their opinion as well as promotion of an egalitarian participation in decisions that affect their lives, developing vocational skills and saving mentality in them. A positive and net effect is observed in the study on impact of the life skills based training in the attitude of adolescent girls (Rajib Acharya et al. 2009). Similarly the life skills based approach namely 'Better Life Options Programme' (BLO) for adolescent girls in India, implemented by the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CED -PA) especially in urban slums of Delhi and rural Madhya Pradesh/Gujarat has had vocational and training support along with skills training. Higher rate of education completion (66%) is observed among them as compared to the control group. According to Advocates for Youth (2013), higher likelihood to reception of better antenatal care has been observed among the experimental group and twice as many of them delivered at hospital thus supporting the effect of the programme in giving more hand to women in pregnancy and delivery related decisions.

An intervention study conducted for providing life skill education to economically backward school going adolescents belonging to tribal community in Bharuch district of Gujarat Province of India showed that the programme helped students and empowered them to understand in a better manner their physical changes, build self confidence and understand gender related issues. It was observed that areas like gender socialization needed modifications and continuous effort, as these were so deep rooted in them. The study also recommends soft skill programmes as a part of school curriculum (Bharath and Kumar 2005).

Life Skills based programmes are not yet adopted in policy level as Government initiative though it is coming up as simple initiatives from the part of Central Board of Secondary Education. This study is conducted in the coastal area school in Kerala, India where such interventions are not so far observed in published form.

Methodology

The major aims of the study include 1) to study the knowledge of Life Skills among adolescents and 2) to study the impact of Life Skills Education on their current knowledge level. The study is based on the hypothesis that Life skills knowledge level of the group that undergoes Life Skills Education training will be better than that of the untrained group. An experimental pre-post study design with a control group is adapted for the study for analyzing impact of Life Skills Education. High School students of a coastal school in Kerala, India has been chosen as the universe of the study with the population including ninth standard students A and B batch. Around 57 students of the foresaid batch are chosen and randomly divided into two groups: experimental (1) counting 30 and experiment-delayed groups (2) counting 27. Adolescent boys and girls of 14-18yrs have been included in the study while population below 14yrs and above 20yrs, population who are not willing to participate, population who are mentally retarded are excluded.

Life skills training module prepared for the study by the researchers was administered to A batch while B received no training. Pre and post data was collected from both batches and after collection of data batch B was also given training on life skills for ethical reasons.

The data was collected through questionnaire developed and administered by the researcher. The tools used for the same include 1) Socio demographic sheet which describes the socio economic status of the respondent. It covers details of the name, age gender, religion, residing location, family type, financial status of family, number of family members, employability, marital status of parents and type of parenting and 2) Life Skills knowledge level analytic questionnaire specially prepared by the researcher for the study which includes questions covering ten skills.

Results and Discussion

Several studies have observed the benefits of Life Skills training as summarised below:

Benefits	**Reference**
Achieving psychological, social and mental wellbeing	Yankey et al. 2012
Improvement of self esteem among students	Esmaeilinasab et al. 2011
Increasing happiness, quality of life and emotion regulation	Tahereh et al. 2011
Decreasing mental disorder symptoms especially anxiety, depression and stress among students	Nasser et al.. 2010

suspected to have mental disorders	
Promotion of social adjustment	Rahmati et al.. 2010
High school students' satisfaction of life	Akbar et al. 2011
Increase changes are observed in behaviour components and problem behaviour of children in need of care and protection through life skills development programmes	LJSS, 2009
Prevention of violence by developing life skills in children including- cognitive, emotional, interpersonal and social skills that enable individuals to deal effectively with challenges in everyday life	Katia et al. 2000

The socio-demographic data is comparable for both experimental and experiment- delayed groups. The respondents were from standard nine and their average was comparable for experimental and experiment- delayed group. The experimental (E) and experiment- delayed(ED) samples show similarity in most of the socio demographic features.

The number of samples in experiment and experiment- delayed group were almost similar with the total sample count in experimental group being 30 and control group being 27. All the samples are from Kerala and same local language and all of them were from village (Panchayat region). The mean age of the respondents of experimental and experiment- delayed group are 14.2 and 14.4 respectively .The samples have more females in constitution (male (E) =40%, female (E) = 6%; male (ED) = 48.1%, female (ED) = 51.9%). In case of family type, both samples had more from nuclear family than extended family (nuclear (E) =80%, extended (E) =20%; nuclear (ED) =81.5%, extended(ED) =18.5%). Both the samples had majority of the parents in married status (married (E) = 93.3%, legally separated (E) =3.3%, widow/widower (E) =3.3%; married (E) = 96.3%, legally separated (E) =0, widow/widower (E) = 3.7%). Regarding the type of parenting, majority the parents in both the samples follow a combination of strict and friendly approach (strict (E) = 0, friendly (E)=40%, both strict and friendly (E)=60%; strict (ED)=3.7%, friendly (ED)=7.4% ,both strict and friendly (ED)=88.9%).

Life Skills Education impact analysis has shown that the knowledge level on overall skills (fig. 1.1-1.5) improved in all the ten skills. The overall self awareness is found to be little different in experimental and experiment- delayed group in pre study with significant difference($t=.876$, $p<0.05$) whereas in post study the knowledge level of experimental group is found to increase and is more than that of the experimental delayed group though not significant ($t=6.969$, $p>.05$). In empathy skill, initially the knowledge level of experimental group was little higher than that of experiment- delayed group though there was no significant difference ($t=.669$, $p>.01$). The knowledge level of experimental group is found to be more than that of experiment- delayed group in post study ($t=8.963$, $p<.05$) whereas that of experimental delayed group in pre and post study remains almost the same. (Fig: 1.1).

The overall critical thinking is found to be almost same in experimental an experiment- delayed group in pre study without any significant difference($t=.701$, $p>.001$) whereas in post study the knowledge level of experimental group is found to increase and is more than that of the experimental delayed groups significantly ($t=8.785$, $p<.05$). In creative thinking skill, initially the knowledge level of experimental group was little higher than that of experiment-delayed group but without any significant difference ($t=0.686$, $p>.05$). The knowledge level of experimental group is found to be more than that of experiment- delayed group in post study with significant difference ($t=7.005$, $p<.05$) whereas that of experimental delayed group in pre and post study remains almost the same. (Fig: 1.2)

The overall decision making is found to be almost same in experimental an experiment- delayed group in pre study with no significant difference ($t=0.483$ $p>.05$) whereas in post study the knowledge level of experimental group is found to increase and is more than that of the experimental delayed group significantly($t=6.176$, $p<.05$). In problem solving skill, the knowledge level of experimental group is found to be more than that of experiment- delayed group in pre study but with no significant difference ($t=.410$,$p>.05$) where as in post study the knowledge level of experimental group is found to increase and is more than that of experiment- delayed group with significant difference ($t=7.571$, $p<.05$). (Fig: 1.3)

The effective communication skill is found to be comparable in experimental and experimental delayed group in the pre study($t=.582$, $p>.05$) but it is found to be significantly higher in experimental group in post study group as compared to that of almost same in experimental delayed group an experiment- delayed group in pre study whereas in post study the knowledge level of experimental group is found to increase and is more than that of the experimental delayed group significantly ($t=8.785$, $p<.05$). In interpersonal skills, initially the knowledge level of experimental group and experiment- delayed group are comparable with no significant difference ($t=.530$, $p>.001$) in the pre study where as in the post study, the knowledge level of experimental group is found to be more than that of experiment- delayed group with significant difference ($t=5.623$, $p<.05$). (Fig: 1.4).

The overall coping with emotions is found to be comparable almost same in experimental an experiment- delayed group in pre study with no much significant difference ($t=.597$, $p>.05$)whereas in post study the knowledge level of experimental group is found to increase and is more than that of the experimental delayed group

significantly(t=6.634, p<.05). In coping with stress, initially the knowledge level of experimental group was almost the same with no significant difference in the pre study (t=.614, p> .05). The knowledge level of experimental group is found to be more than that of experiment- delayed group in post study with significant difference (t=6.856, p<.05). (Fig: 1.5).

Appendix: Figures and Tables

Fig. 1.1

Self-awareness and Empathy skills

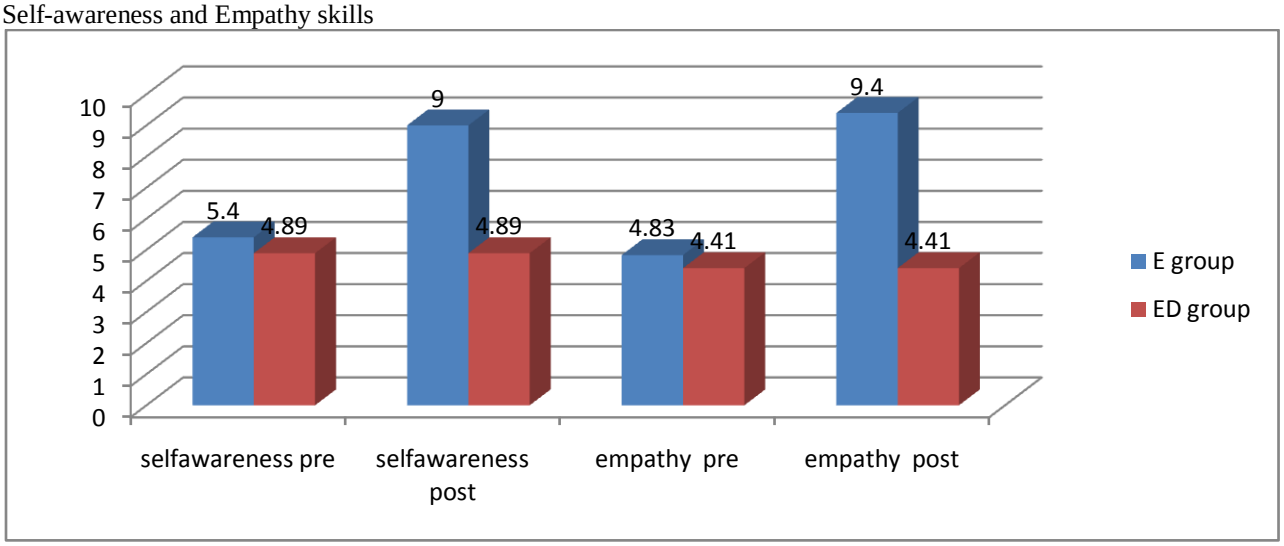

Fig. 1.1: The overall self awareness is found to be little different in experimental an experiment delayed group in pre study with significant difference(t=.876, p<0.05) whereas in post study the knowledge level of experimental group is found to increase and is more than that of the experimental delayed group though not significant (t=6.969, p>.05). In empathy skill, initially the knowledge level of experimental group was little higher than that of experiment delayed group though there was no significant difference (t=.669, p>.01). The knowledge level of experimental group is found to be more than that of experiment delayed group in post study (t=8.963, p<.05) whereas that of experimental delayed group in pre and post study remains almost the same.

Fig. 1.2

Critical thinking and Creative thinking skills

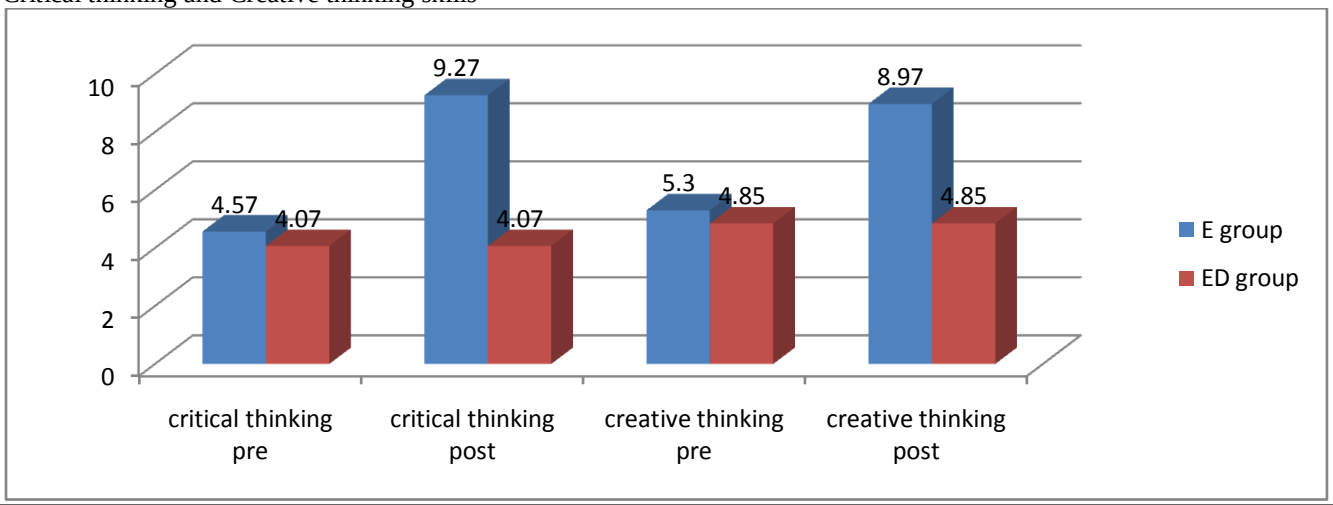

Fig. 1.2: The overall critical thinking is found to be almost same in experimental an experiment delayed group in pre study without any significant difference(t=.701, p>.001) whereas in post study the knowledge level of experimental group is found to increase and is more than that of the experimental delayed groups significantly (t=8.785, p<.05). In creative thinking skill, initially the knowledge level of experimental group was little higher than that of experiment delayed group but without any significant difference (t=0.686, p>.05). The knowledge level of experimental group is found to be more than that of experiment delayed group in post study with significant difference (t=7.005, p<.05) whereas that of experimental delayed group in pre and post study remains almost the same.

Fig. 1.3
Decision making and Problem solving skills

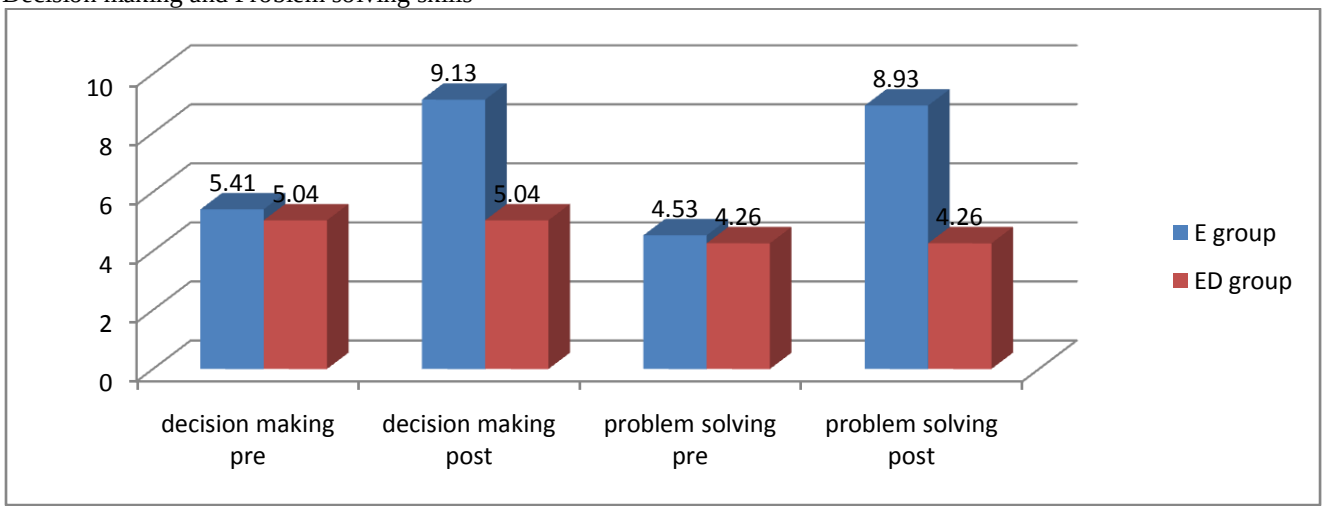

Fig. 1.3: The overall decision making is found to be almost same in experimental an experiment delayed group in pre study with no significant difference (t=0.483 p>.05) whereas in post study the knowledge level of experimental group is found to increase and is more than that of the experimental delayed group significantly(t=6.176, p<.05). In problem solving skill, the knowledge level of experimental group is found to be more than that of experiment delayed group in pre study but with no significant difference (t=.410,p >.05) where as in post study the knowledge level of experimental group is found to increase and is more than that of experiment delayed group with significant difference (t=7.571, p<.05).

Fig. 1.4
Effective communication and Interpersonal skills

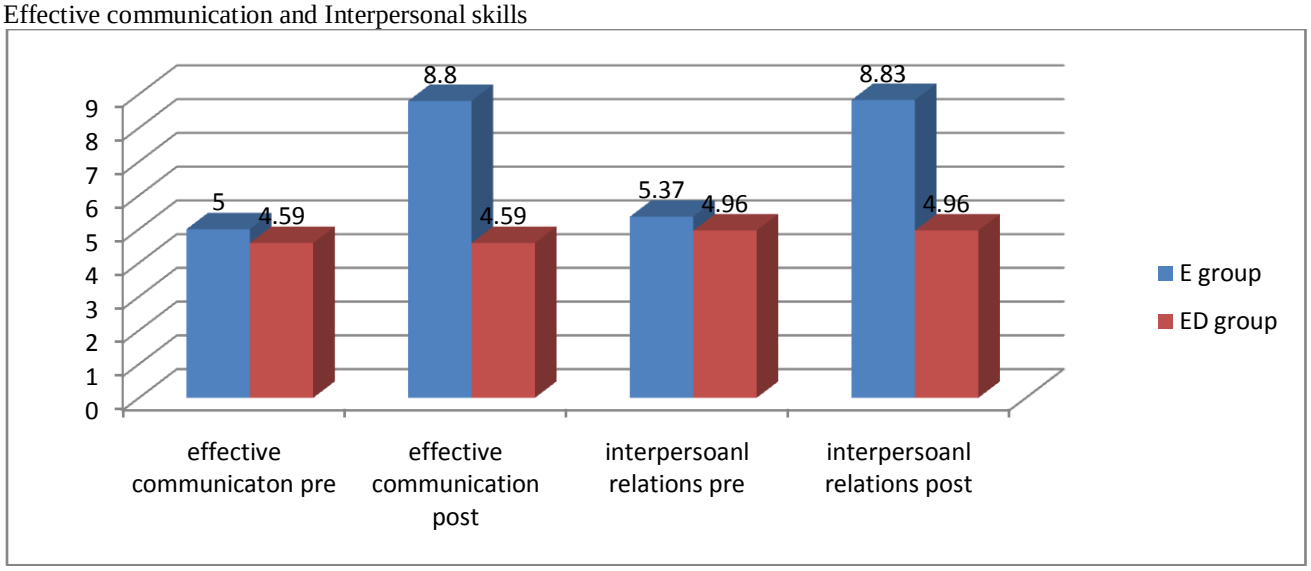

Fig. 1.4: The effective communication skill is found to be comparable in experimental and experimental delayed group in the pre study(t=.582, p>.05) but it is found to be significantly higher in experimental group in post study group as compared to that of almost same in experimental delayed group an experiment delayed group in pre study whereas in post study the knowledge level of experimental group is found to increase and is more than that of the experimental delayed group significantly (t=8.785, p<.05). In creative thinking skill, initially the knowledge level of experimental group and experiment delayed group are comparable with no significant difference (t=.530, p>.001) in the pre study where as in the post study, the knowledge level of experimental group is found to be more than that of experiment delayed group with significant difference (t=5.623, p<.05).

Fig. 1.5
Coping with emotions and Coping with stress skills

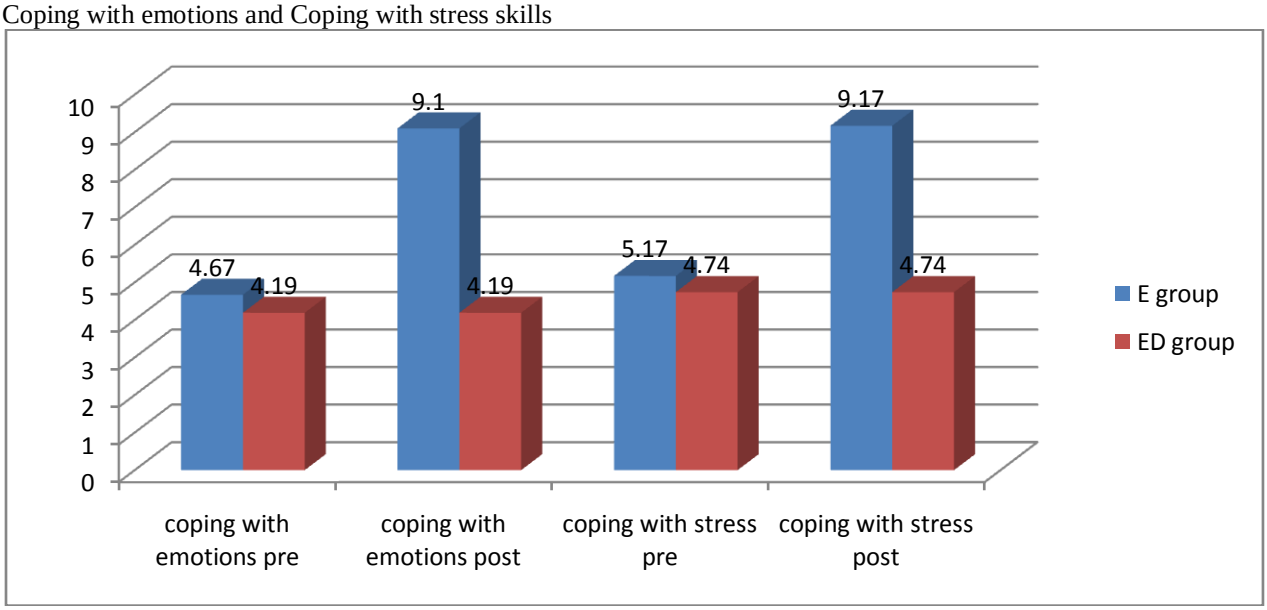

Fig. 1.5: The overall coping with emotions is found to be comparable almost same in experimental an experiment delayed group in pre study with no much significant difference (t=.597, p>.05)whereas in post study the knowledge level of experimental group is found to increase and is more than that of the experimental delayed group significantly(t=6.634, p<.05). In coping with stress, initially the knowledge level of experimental group was almost the same with no significant difference in the pre study (t=.614, p> .05). The knowledge level of experimental group is found to be more than that of experiment delayed group in post study with significant difference (t=6.856, p<.05).

Conclusion

The study had some limitations like it is conducted in a limited number of samples. The tool used; the questionnaire is phase validated and needs standardisation and scale significance was missing in several spaces.

The major suggestion for future is that the study needs to be extended more into larger number of samples. Contextualisation and modifying the module based on need and nature of the intervention groups can add on to the efficiency. The scope of using variety of methods for transmitting the skills also needs to be taken into account.

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