

Effectiveness of Life Skill Training Through the Art of Storytelling on Academic Performance of Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity and Conduct Disorder

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Abstract

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and conduct disorder are the most common disorders seen in children. This study was carried out to ascertain the effect of training of life skills on the academic performance of the children with ADHD and conduct disorder. One hundred fifty children of ADHD and conduct disorder from Delhi state in India were given life skill training through the art of storytelling. Pre test –intervention- post test design was used in this study. Appropriate stories from the module of panchatantra were selected to teach life skills. Academic performance rating scale was administered both before and after training to check the academic performance. Post test was conducted after 6 months of training. After life skill training (posttest), there was a significant improvement in the academic performance of children with ADHD and conduct disorder. The results of the posttest showed that the intervention was equally effective for male and female children. Life skill training through the art of storytelling (use of panchatantra stories) proved beneficial. This study showed that life skills training (through the art of storytelling) may be imparted as a complementary intervention for improving academic performance of children with ADHD and conduct disorder.

Keywords: Life Skill Training; Storytelling; Academic Performance; Conduct Disorder; Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

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Introduction

Attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and conduct disorder are the common behavioral disorder among children. Prevalence of ADHD in state of Delhi, India, is 28.5% in children belonging to the age group of 9-11 years, 40.9% in age group of 12-14 years and 30.6% in 15-17 years [1]. Conduct disorder was the most common psychiatric disorder observed in 4.5% of children [1,2]

Children with ADHD and conduct disorder have behavior, academic and peer problems which often cause serious impairments in academic performance, social adaptive and behavioral functioning, both inside and outside the home [3]. At academic level, children with ADHD and conduct disorder have characteristic difficulties in reading and writing [4,5]. These children have higher rates of failures and grade retention; very few reach for high school graduation and post-secondary education [6]. Children with ADHD and conduct disorder with comorbidities are likely to show school maladjustment which is measured as disorderly classroom behavior, violent social behavior and peer rejection [7]. These children mostly display aggressive behavior because of school difficulties, problems in regulating emotions in interpersonal relations and handling interpersonal conflicts. Factors associated with academic underachievement in children with ADHD and conduct disorder are low self esteem, peer problems, difficulties in establishing interpersonal relationship and antisocial behavior. Thus, it is the need of the hour that these problems need to be addressed. It is important for the educators and other school personnel to be aware of effective interventions for this disorder and to support their use across home and school settings. Daly, Creed, Xanthopoulos, and Brown (2007) [8] have questioned the evidence for

long-term use of stimulant medications for improving the learning disabilities and peer relationships in children with ADHD. Poor compliance to treatment, particularly while in school[9], often leads parents to seek alternate approaches.

Life skill training is helpful to improve thinking process. Life skill training is based on three areas of change. First area is knowledge. Other two areas are attitude and skill. A life skill enables to transform knowledge, skill, attitudes and morals into actual abilities i.e., what to do and how to do the work, given the scope and opportunity to do so. Stories enhance the reading skill, listening skills, increase attention and concentration; improve self esteem and self confidence. These factors motivate the researcher to use life skill training to improve academic performance. India is worldwide known for its rich collection of children's literature. The Panchatantra belongs to the oral practice of the primordial India. It is perhaps the oldest collection of stories in Indian culture which is still surviving and used in modern era. Panchatantra is a collection of stories of animals speaking like humans which attract the children of ADHD and conduct disorder. Present study used stories from panchatantra to train children with ADHD and conduct disorders with life skills and to enhance their level of academic performance. These stories are popular and told throughout the world.

This study was aimed to explore the effect of life skill training through the art of storytelling using panchatantra stories on the academic performance of children with conduct disorder.

Method and Tools for Data Collection

The sample of the study comprised 150 children selected by purposive sampling, in the age range of 10-19 years. The sample was collected from the various non-governmental organizations in Delhi. Tools used in the study were socio demographic profile and academic performance rating scale. Academic performance was measured with academic performance rating scale. Rating scale was adapted from academic performance rating scale (DuPaul, Rapport, & Perriello, 1991)[10] and academic performance questionnaire (Bennett, Power, Eiraldi, Leff, & Blum, 2009)[11]. In the present study both the rating scales were combined to suit the present population. Total 27 items were included in the scale. It measured various areas like percentage of work complete, percentage of work completed accurately, whether child is able to follow class instruction, quality of reading skill, listening skill, whether child

is able to pay attention etc. The scale was 5-point rating scale. Validity of the academic performance indicator or rating scale was done by experts from the field. Test-retest reliability coefficient was 0.95 and internal consistency established by split half method was 0.733.

Pretest was done. Training of life skills was given through the use of panchatantra stories. These stories were imparted to teach ten life skills (self awareness building, critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, effective communication, decision-making, interpersonal relationship skills, empathy and coping with stress and handling emotions). The intervention consisted of different sessions on life skills for a period of six months. The academic performance rating scale was filled by the educator or teacher after the training of life skills.

Results

Table 1 and figure 1, revealed that mean academic score of children with ADHD and CD increased after training. Using the paired sample *t*-test, the mean score of academic performance changed significantly after the training. Hence, life skill training through the art of stories (panchatantra stories) improved the academic performance of children with ADHD and conduct disorder.

Effect of life skill training on academic performance of male and female children.

Table 2 reveals that mean academic score of male and female children with ADHD, increased after training. Using the paired sample *t*-test, the mean score of academic performance changed significantly after the training. Figure 2, depicts the change in the score of

Table 1

	Mean score in academic performance before and after life skill training of children (N=150)		
	Academic Score before training Mean (SD)	Academic Score after training Mean (SD)	't' test
ADHD(n=82)	50.80 (20.37)	77.91 (17.75)	15.09*
CD(n= 68)	58.51(25.83)	80.94 (21.57)	11.64*

*significant, P<0.05

Table 2

Effect of life skill training on academic score of male and female children of ADHD			
Gender	Score before training Mean (SD)	Score after training Mean (SD)	't' test
Male (n=41)	49.21(20.15)	78.65 (16.95)	10.99*
Female (n=41)	52.39 (20.72)	77.17(18.70)	10.45*

*significant, P<0.05

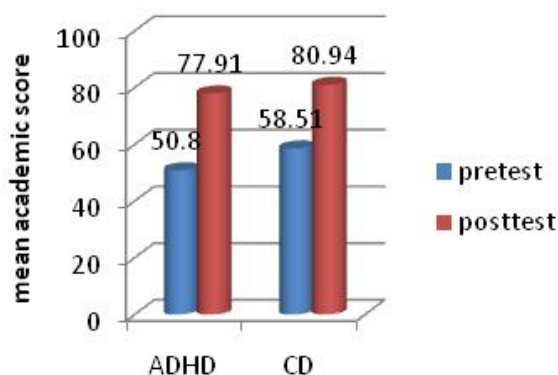


Fig. 1: Mean academic score of children before and after intervention.

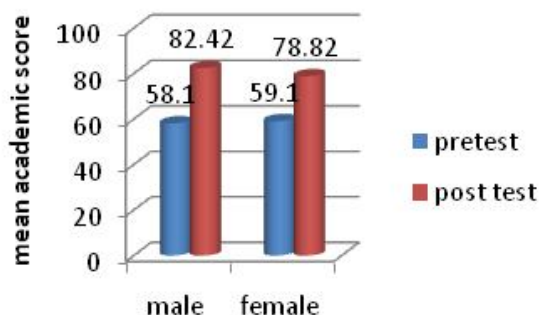


Fig. 2: mean academic score of children with CD before and after intervention

male and female children of CD. The value of 't' test for male was 9.88 and female was 6.43 which was significant at p<0.001. Hence, life skill training through the art of stories (panchtantra stories) improved the academic performance of both male and female children with ADHD as well as CD.

Discussion

Children with ADHD and CD have to face more pressure in comparison to normal children. They have to face the same standards of education as with normal children with limited social and emotional resource. They need to struggle more to get comparable results, to assimilate themselves into the mainstream. So they lag behind in academic pursuits as compared to normal children, to derive meaning from the knowledge they gather and use it productively and purposefully for the noble cause. The life skill training prepares them to become a better person. In this study, academic performance improved. It might be due to the fact that life skills training, given by the researcher addressed issue such as self-awareness, decision making, interpersonal skills. Homework was given to increase the confidence of students giving them the opportunity to practice and have positive experiences in doing so. Students were taught not to ignore problems, how to set goals, how to make decisions, how to overcome problems and all important life skills for academic adjustment.

This result has been supported by various studies. Savojo et al. (2013)[12] showed that the life skill training program had positive effect on achievement motivation and academic achievement of children and its effect on girls and boys was similar. Amirian (2012)[13] suggested that teaching problem-solving, self awareness, coping with stress skills had significant impact on students' academic achievement. Niaraki and Rahimi (2013)[14] also suggested that life skill training improved school performance and academics. Payton et al. (2008)[15] found that social emotional learning programs are helpful to improve children's academic performance. Fallahchai (2012) showed that the children who had received academic and life skills training gained significantly higher scores academic achievement than those with no training. According to the role and necessity of life skills training, training of these skills must be included in all educational levels as main component of curriculum of schools. Other studies found that educational programs for children with emotional and behavioral disorders must include attention to mastering academics, developing social skills, and increasing self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-control to increase academic performance[16]. A life skill has a great relevance in empowering study habits and thus affecting academic achievement. Children with ADHD lack the skill of establishing daily routine and life skill helps in the improvement of volition. These children lack listening skills. Beyond

doubt, this is improved by storytelling and listening is vital for academic success. The study concluded that stories selected specially from panchatantra positively affect adjustment of these children. This method can be used as complementary method in children with conduct disorder and ADHD to improve adjustment level.

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