The comparison of life skills in male and female students of village and city in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province

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Abstract
This study was performed with the aim of comparing the life skills of male and female students of village and city in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province. The research method is survey. The statistical population of the study included all high school students in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province among whom 704 students were selected by quota multi stage sampling. The research method was a researcher-made life skills questionnaire and its reliability coefficient was calculated more than 0.88. The study results showed that male and female students have a significant difference in the scales of problem solving, coping with stress, coping with emotion and empathy, the mean score of male students is more than the mean score of female students in three scales of problem solving, coping with stress, and coping with emotion but the mean score of female students is more than the score of male students in terms of empathy. The results of T-test showed that the students of city gained higher scores in all scales of life skills. In other words, the students who study in urban areas have more awareness of social skills than the students of rural areas.

Keywords: Life skills, student, high school period

Introduction:
Different studies show the fact that most mental health problems and social-mental disorders are rooted in the lack of awareness of life skills. For example, the studies have shown that after the establishment of training programs on social skills in schools, a significant development will be created in different aspects of mental health like self-efficacy (Moafi and Gusaptono, 2010), self-esteem (Esmaili Nasab, Malek Muhammadi, Ghiasvand and Bahrami, 2011), self image (Elias 1991) and a significant decrease will be
also created in social maladjustment and emotion (Buhler, Schroder and Silbereisen, 2008) and social anxiety (Saeid Manesh, et al, 2015)

Life skills include a set of abilities which provide the context of adjustment and positive and useful behavior. These behaviors enable the person to accept his/her social responsibilities and face his/her demands, expectations and daily problems, especially in interpersonal relations without hurting him/herself and others in an efficient way. (Taremian, 2001) According to the statement of Global Health Organization, social skills are those which are taught to people in order to increase mental and social abilities and enable them to face life needs and challenges in an efficient way. (Global Health Organization, 1997)

On the other hand, our country’s population is considered as a young population and a large part of this population is studying in schools and need and training. In fact, school is a small social system where students learn ethical rules, social norms, attitudes and ways of communication and many life skills and in general, formal education creates attitudes, values and skills that may not be possible in other social fields except school. (Alaghe Band, 2002) In fact, school provides a unique opportunity to teach social skills. Thus, students are considered as a good target group to teach social skills. Although, life skills have been taught since a few years ago with the cooperation of Welfare organization and Department of Education and in the form of social-oriented activities, (Department of Cultural Affairs and the Department of Social Welfare Prevention, 2005) this plan has begun without the primary evaluation about the awareness of students about life skills while a Diagnostic Evaluation should be done before presenting any kind of teaching in order to determine the weaknesses and Strengths students and the starting point of teaching and also type of teaching. (Saif, 1996) Thus, this study was planned and performed with the aim of studying the level of awareness about life skills in high school students in Cahar Mahal Bakhtiari province. The findings of this study can determine the weaknesses and Strengths of students in the field of life skills and help better planning to teach these skills. In this study, the level of awareness about life skills in students (including 10 skills) were studied (Department of Cultural Affairs and the Department of Social Welfare Prevention 2004).

Decision making
problem solving
creative thinking
critical thinking
establishing effective relationships
establishing adjusted (compatible) interpersonal relationships
self-awareness
empathy
In this study, two main questions were designed and studied as follows:

Is there a significant difference between the life skills of female and male students?

Is there a significant difference between the urban and rural students?

**Research methodology**

*The population, sample and sampling*

The research method is descriptive-survey. The required data about the level of awareness about life skills in students were collected by questionnaire. The statistical population of the study included all high school students of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province among whom 704 students (302 boys and 382 girls) were selected by quota multi stage sampling. Among them, 390 students lived in city and 314 students lived in village.

**Research tools**

In this study, a researcher-made life skills questionnaire and its reliability coefficient was calculated more than 0.88. This questionnaire has 80 items and measures the use of each life skill with a 4-point scale (rarely, sometimes, often, always)

1. Decision making
2. problem solving
3. creative thinking
4. critical thinking
5. establishing effective relationships
6. establishing adjusted (compatible) interpersonal relationships
7. self-awareness
8. empathy
9. coping with emotion
10. coping with stress

In the first step, to prepare this questionnaire, 100 items were provided in 10 scales by referring to scientific texts about life skills and by using the definition of the Global Health Organization about life skills. In the second step, these items were given to 3 professors of psychology and counselling to determine the face validity of each item according to the described scale. From this set, 80 items that had acceptable face validity were selected. In the third step, the preliminary questionnaire that included 80 items was given to a sample of students in a high school for boys and a high school for girls (n=70). The students were asked to answer the questionnaire and determine the understandability of the items in the questionnaire. After receiving the answers of students, the items were revised and also the internal consistency of questionnaire was calculated by Cronbach’s alpha. In the initial study, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was calculated as 0.88. The internal consistency coefficient ensured the researcher that this questionnaire has a good reliability (from 0.84 for creative thinking to 0.91 for empathy) and thus it can be used in the study.
The Analysis of Data
We have used Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics such as T-test for analyzing data.

Research Findings
Table 1 shows the results of T-test to study the difference between male and female students in life skills. As the table shows, male and female students have a significant difference only in the scales of problem solving (t=2.45, p=0.05), coping with stress (t=2.68, p=0.008), coping with emotion (t=3.847, p<0.0001), empathy (t=-2.936, p=0.003). This table shows that the mean score of male students in three scales of problem solving (51), coping with stress (51.1), coping with emotion (51.56), is more than the mean score of female students in the scales of problem solving (49.16), coping with stress (49.08) and coping with emotion (48.68). But the mean score of female students in the scale of empathy (51.01) is more than the score of male students (48.80). Although female and male students have difference in sub-scales of life skills, the results of analysis show that there is not a significant difference between students in terms of the total life skills questionnaire.

Table 1. The results of T-test to study the difference between male and female students in life skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>skills</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>mean (female)</th>
<th>mean (male)</th>
<th>difference between the two means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication</td>
<td>1.007</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>49.65</td>
<td>50.41</td>
<td>76.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.942</td>
<td>50.03</td>
<td>49.97</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing relationship</td>
<td>-0.614</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.539</td>
<td>50.21</td>
<td>49.75</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>-0.095</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.925</td>
<td>50.03</td>
<td>49.96</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Thinking</td>
<td>-0.255</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.799</td>
<td>50.09</td>
<td>49.90</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>49.16</td>
<td>51.00</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>1.917</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>49.34</td>
<td>50.79</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping with stress</td>
<td>2.680</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>49.08</td>
<td>51.10</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping with emotion</td>
<td>3.847</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>48.68</td>
<td>51.56</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>2.936</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>51.01</td>
<td>48.80</td>
<td>-2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Skills</td>
<td>1.152</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>49.60</td>
<td>50.47</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the results of T-test to study the difference between the students who live in city and village in terms of social skills. As can be seen, the students who live in city gained higher scores in all scales of life skills and the mean difference of the two groups is significant in all scales. (p<0.0001) In other words, the students who study in urban areas have more awareness about life skills compared to the students of rural areas.
Table 2. The results of T-test to study the difference between the students who live in city and village in terms of social skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>skills</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>urban (mean)</th>
<th>rural (mean)</th>
<th>difference between the two means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication</td>
<td>6.889</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>52.26</td>
<td>47.20</td>
<td>5.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>13.153</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>53.99</td>
<td>45.05</td>
<td>8.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing relationship</td>
<td>6.325</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>52.08</td>
<td>47.41</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>7.947</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>52.58</td>
<td>46.80</td>
<td>5.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Thinking</td>
<td>5.726</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>51.89</td>
<td>47.65</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
<td>7.41</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>52.42</td>
<td>47.00</td>
<td>5.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>6.327</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>52.08</td>
<td>47.41</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping with stress</td>
<td>4.109</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>51.37</td>
<td>48.29</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping with emotion</td>
<td>4.615</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>51.54</td>
<td>48.09</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>5.488</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>51.82</td>
<td>47.74</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Skills</td>
<td>9.690</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>53.08</td>
<td>46.17</td>
<td>6.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion:**

The results showed that male and female students have a significant difference only in three scales of problem solving, coping with stress and coping with emotion and the mean score of male students in three scales of problem solving, coping with stress and coping with emotion is more than the mean score of female students. The mean score of female students in the scale of empathy is more than male students. These findings show that male students have more control on their emotions and feelings and act more efficiently while facing life stresses. Also, male students have higher problem solving skill than female students. In other words, they use problem solving methods more while facing different life problems.

As can be expected, female students have gained higher score in the skill of empathy than male students. Empathy means that a person can understand the others’ views and attitudes without being in the same conditions. This finding indicates that female students can better understand the others and look from the others’ perspective. But male students have fewer skills in this field. The study of Rudman and Glick (2010) and Laurent and Hodges (2009) show that women are better than men in terms of empathy, the obtained results are not beyond expectations. in a society where boys receive more social responsibilities and are expected to stand in front of life problems and girls are expected to play the role of a friend and companion, boys find more efficient in coping skills like coping with stress, coping with emotion and decision making and on the contrary show less empathy skills that is more consistent with girls.

The point of recent studies is that despite the difference between the two genders in 4 sub-scales, there was no significant difference between female and male students in terms of the total score of life skills. The reason if that the algebraic sum of the difference between male and female students in 10 scales of life skills are close to zeros.
The results of T-test show that the students who lived in city gained higher scores in all scales of life skills. In other words, the students who studied in urban areas have more awareness of life skills compared to the students of rural areas.

This finding is consistent with the study of Talkhabi (2003). He states that the social skills of urban students are significantly more than the social skills of rural students. He also states that the social skills of the students whose teachers have a higher level of education is higher and with the increase of teachers’ job experience, students significantly gain higher score in the evaluation of social behaviors. With the increase of fathers’ level of education, the social skills of students increase and with the increase of family members, the social skills of students decrease.

Living and studying in village cause many limitations for the residents. Villagers have more limited relations, have less use of mass media and on the other hand since villagers are less involved in the problems of the residents of city, they have less opportunity to face these problems and thus learn these skills.

The present study, like any other scientific work, has faced limitations and some of their most important ones are as follows:

Due to the lack of a standard questionnaire about life skills, the researchers designed a new questionnaire. Although in this study, the questionnaire’s reliability was approved by calculating Cronbach’s alpha, but only the face validity and content of the questionnaire were examined and its Construct validity was not studied.

Due to the Size and distribution of student’s population in the province, total random sampling could not be used and the desired sample was selected only from 6 educational areas.

**Practical suggestions:**
Due to the limitations of this study and the obtained results, some suggestions are provided as follows:

The results show that female students obtained lower scores in life skills than male students; training classes can be held in the field of teaching life skills especially in the field of coping with stress, coping with emotion and problem solving for female students.

According to the results of this study that the rural students had a weaker performance in all life skills, teaching life skills to them is in the first priority.

**References:**

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