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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# ASSESSMENT OF LIFE SKILLS AND TOLERANCE OF PREADOLESCENTS IN RELATION TO THEIR PET OWNERSHIP

\*Dr. Smitha, A.

Guest Faculty, Department of Education, Central University of Kerala, Periya, Kasaragod, Kerala, India

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#### \*Corresponding author:

Dr. Smitha, A.

### ABSTRACT

The present paper is aimed to study if there is a significant difference in the level of life skills and tolerance of preadolescents in relation to their pet ownership on implementing life skills education programme. The study was based on single group design. The sample was comprised of thirty-six preadolescents of age thirteen years from Navodaya Vidyalaya, Kasaragod, Kerala for the present study. Simple random sampling method was used to select the sample. The life skills scale, tolerance scale and tolerance situational test were the tools used for the study which were self-developed and standardized by the researcher. Interview and discussion were conducted among preadolescents to measure their level of life skills and tolerance concerning to their pet ownership. The statistical techniques used were mean, standard deviation and t-test. The qualitative data obtained from interview and discussion were analyzed using content analysis. Triangulation was adopted to cross check the results obtained from qualitative method with quantitative method. The result was found that there was no significant difference in the level of life skills and tolerance between the preadolescents who have pet at home and those who do not have pet at home.

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## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between pets and humans are significant and enduring. In recent times, nuclear family is the place in which life skills and tolerance are being taught to children. In such circumstances, pet ownership can play a vital role in more learning experiences to cultivate life skills and tolerance to the young generation. Preadolescence is one of the crucial phase of life related to their effort to increase the quality of physical and mental health for overall well being. Life skills and tolerance are the fundamental contributors to the development of preadolescents. Pet ownership have the potential to enhance the level of life skills and tolerance among preadolescents which leads to the physical, emotional, cognitive, social, educational and behavioural development. Pet ownership act as the life boosters to increase the self-esteem, self-concept, resilience and assertiveness in preadolescents. Pet ownership is an appropriate domain where preadolescents can care and interact to prove their demands, needs and desires which are essential for cherishing and practicing their independence and responsibilities.

However, in the present study, result revealed that after the implementation of multi-strategy life skills education programme there was no significant difference in the level of life skills and tolerance among preadolescents based on their pet ownership.

**Life Skills and Tolerance:** The World Health Organization (1999) has defined life skills as, "the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life". UNICEF defines life skills as "a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills." According to Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary (2011), tolerance is "the willingness to accept or tolerate somebody/something, especially opinions or behavior that you may not agree with, or people who are not like you." According to American Heritage Dictionary (1994), tolerance is defined as "the appreciation of diversity and the ability to live and let others live. It is the ability to exercise a fair and objective attitude towards those whose opinions, practices, religion, nationality and so on differs from one's own".

According to the Declaration on the Principles of Tolerance, UNESCO (1995), tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's culture, our forms of expression and ways of being human. Tolerance is harmony in difference (Khalid, 2013, p.77).” Developing life skills and tolerance among preadolescents is a life long process rather than an end point.

**Need of Life Skills and Tolerance for Preadolescents:** Life skills and tolerance differ from one human to another. They are developed by their environment, others' influence and changes according to the different circumstances. The fostering of life skills and tolerance in preadolescents will help them to enhance their quality in life style which is necessary for developing psycho-social competence. Fostering life skills and tolerance among preadolescents will empower them to avoid bad habits. Sensitivity and equity with regard to gender will prepare the preadolescents to become responsible citizen of society. Preadolescents who spend their time with pets render respect to other people. In the later stages of their life pet ownership will allow them to understand, recognize, accept, respect and appreciate differences in individuals. Preadolescents will ensure on their own that plastics, wrappers and other non-degradable objects are managed carefully and try to keep things at right place. Preadolescents who are pet owners will turn to be compassionate and sensitive to living beings. School education for enhancing life skills and tolerance among preadolescents has been a major concern in many nations. Life skills and tolerance will enable preadolescents to practice skills, values and peace. Life skills and tolerance are very essential to eradicate conflicts arising in the social system. Life skills and tolerance are required at individual, social, family, cultural, political and religious levels.

**Meaningful Role of Pet ownership in Enhancing Life Skills and Tolerance among Preadolescents:** Pets are one of the key factor of humans' lives which act as a vital catalyst for developing life skills and tolerance. Feeling of comfort and safety is uplifted through pet ownership. In the present conditions, most of the preadolescents have mood swings which is balanced in the companionship of pets with their outpouring of love and care. Positive experiences with pets helps the preadolescents to face effectively all the challenges of life. Life skills are the adaptive and positive behaviour that enable the individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of life. Planning, organizing and taking up responsibilities are developed by the preadolescents who own pets. The quality of readiness by actively participating in day-to-day activities are found among the preadolescents who have pets at home. Pet ownership supports the preadolescents in decreasing the level of loneliness and thereby improving the process of socialization. Responsible pet care strategy provides an opportunity for adolescents to become much more mature, flexible in thoughts and actions. The preadolescents who own pets are generally found to be good at self-awareness, problem solving, informed decision making, critical thinking, creative thinking, effective communication, empathy, strong interpersonal relationships, coping with emotions and coping with stress. The listening skills of preadolescents will increase when they are engaged with pets.

**Pet Ownership and Mental Health of Preadolescents:** Pet ownership is a great way to enhance life skills and tolerance of preadolescents because pets serve as a great source of encouragement, motivation and support to them to live

mentally healthier life. Preadolescence is the vital phase in their role and functioning to increase the quality of physical and mental health for emotional well being across their life span. Self-confidence, self-esteem and assertiveness help the preadolescents to make better choices for their healthy and positive behaviour. Relationships with pets are the basic contributions which acts as the crucial way for the psycho-social development of preadolescents. Pet ownership increases the possibility for social and emotional adjustment which will greatly influence the positive mental health of preadolescents. Pet ownership is an effective method to reduce stress, anxiety, depression, anger, sadness, frustration, aggression due to a lot of work pressure in the daily routines of preadolescents. The pets boost the level of cognitive development of preadolescents which is an essential factor for learning and retaining information. Preadolescents on understanding the needs and demands of their pets try to fulfil them which helps in increasing prosocial behaviour

### Objectives of the Study

- To find out significant difference in the post-test mean score of life skills and its components of secondary school students with respect to their pet ownership.
- To find out significant difference in the post-test mean score of tolerance and its components of secondary school students with respect to their pet ownership.

### Hypotheses of the Study

- There is no significant difference in the post-test mean score of life skills and its components of secondary school students with respect to their pet ownership.
- There is no significant difference in the post-test mean score of tolerance and its components of secondary school students with respect to their pet ownership.

### METHODOLOGY

Multi-strategy life skills education programme was implemented for two months among preadolescents. The modules of multi-strategy life skills education programme were based on life skills and tolerance.

For the present study, the selected components of life skills were problem solving, decision making, effective communication, empathy and coping with stress and the selected components of tolerance were general tolerance, social tolerance, cultural tolerance and religious tolerance. In the present study, both quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted to collect and analyse the data.

### Methods

The research design adopted for the present study is one group pretest-post-test experimental research design or single group design. The data was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

### Population

In the present study, all eighth-class students of CBSE schools in Kasaragod district, Kerala formed the population.

## Sample

In the present study, 36 students of eighth class from Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Kasaragod formed the sample. The total sample was divided into two groups comprising of sixteen preadolescents who owned pets at home and twenty preadolescents who did not own pets at home.

## Tools of the Study

- Life skills Scale
- Tolerance Scale
- Tolerance Situational Test
- Interview

## DISCUSSION

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the post-test mean score of life skills and its components of secondary school students with respect to their pet ownership.

**Table 1. Test of significance of difference in the post-test mean score of life skills and its components with respect to pet ownership**

Life skills & its Components	Pet ownership	N	Mean	SD	SE <sub>D</sub>	t-value
Overall life skills	Pet at home	16	136.19	8.86	2.98	0.06
	No pet at home	20	136.00	8.92		
Problem solving	Pet at home	16	31.06	3.36	1.10	0.58
	No pet at home	20	31.70	3.23		
Decision making	Pet at home	16	29.31	2.68	0.93	0.01
	No pet at home	20	29.30	2.83		
Effective communication	Pet at home	16	29.00	2.58	0.92	0.93
	No pet at home	20	28.15	2.85		
Empathy	Pet at home	16	21.06	2.23	0.84	0.01
	No pet at home	20	21.05	2.72		
Coping with stress	Pet at home	16	25.75	2.14	0.93	0.05
	No pet at home	20	25.80	3.20		

In the above given table 1, the computed t-value is found to be less than the critical value of t (2.03) at 0.05 level. So, it is not statistically significant. Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference in the post-test mean score of life skills and its components such as problem solving, decision making, effective communication, empathy and coping with stress of students who have pet at home and those who do not have pet at home. Hence there exists no significant difference in the post-test mean score of life skills and its components with respect to their pet ownership.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the post-test mean score of tolerance and its components of secondary school students with respect to their pet ownership.

**Table 2: Test of significance of difference in the post-test mean score of tolerance and its components with respect to pet ownership**

Tolerance & its Components	Pet ownership	N	Mean	SD	SE <sub>D</sub>	t-value
Overall tolerance	Pet at home	16	126.06	7.58	2.50	0.23
	No pet at home	20	126.65	7.39		
General tolerance	Pet at home	16	39.06	6.36	1.86	0.07
	No pet at home	20	39.20	4.79		
Social tolerance	Pet at home	16	28.94	4.61	1.52	0.35
	No pet at home	20	28.40	4.46		
Cultural tolerance	Pet at home	16	30.63	5.07	1.50	0.78
	No pet at home	20	31.80	3.95		
Religious tolerance	Pet at home	16	27.44	2.80	0.93	0.25
	No pet at home	20	27.20	2.76		

In each of the above given table 2, the computed t-value is found to be less than the critical value oft (2.03) at 0.05 level. So, it is not statistically significant. Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted. So, there is no significant difference between the post-test mean score of tolerance and its components such as general tolerance, social tolerance, cultural tolerance and religious tolerance of students who have pet at home and those who do not have pet at home. Hence, there exists no significant difference in the post-test mean score of tolerance and its components of secondary school students with respect to their pet ownership.

## CONCLUSION

The impact of pet ownership on the development of adolescents is the most promising field of research but the result of the study is evident to claim that pet ownership does not play any role in the enhancement of life skills and tolerance of preadolescents on implementing multi-strategy life skills education programme. However, the multi-strategy life skills education programme can be implemented among preadolescents who are pet owners as well as non-pet owners. Therefore, pet ownership can never act as a barrier in implementing multi-strategy life skills education programme among preadolescents.

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