

ASSESSMENT OF BASIC LIFE SKILLS ACTIVITIES IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF KEBBI STATE.

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Abstract

The role of Lifeskills activities in high schools has changed the perverse perception that people have about school globally. Lifeskill encompasses both the mental and the physical strength of students in schools, unlike the conventional idea that is strictly cognitive. Thus, the ability of students to learn fast in school may be a function of some life skills they have learned. Based on this essential role that basic life skills play in learning, the Nigerian government adopted it into the educational curriculum. However, the level at which this policy is practised especially in the Northern part of the country has propelled the 'Skills Outside School Foundation (SOSF)' to carry out a baseline survey in 12 selected public schools in two local government areas of Kebbi State. Thus, based on the results of the survey, it was discovered that 50% and 55% of the principals and teachers respectively affirmed that basic life skills sessions are observed in their schools. Thus the study recommends that the government through its agencies (Ministry of Education) and other partners should monitor to ensure that every secondary school in Nigeria increase and observe basic life skills sessions, and teachers should be taught one or two life skills to teach students before graduating as this will help to close the endemic skill gaps and improve the employability potentials of secondary school leavers in the country.

Keywords: Life Skills, Schools, Kebbi State, Nigeria.

1. General Introduction.

The conventional settings and perceptions about schools globally are for students to acquire direct knowledge for a specific period within a confined setting which the outcome consequently can help improve their well-being and drive social-economic and technological change in their countries. However, as innovations about what school should impact and what not to impact on students continue to unravelled, life skills became imperative as their importance is not restricted to the community where the students reside, rather it contributes to nation-building in a way that as students learn life skills from school or parents, they can represent their country in one competition and may win accolades for her. This is one of the core areas in which the Asian, European, the United States and some South American schools operate (Chris, 2019; Mantak, et al 2010 and International Youth Foundation, 2006).

Life skills in developing countries are still yet to be completely adopted and practice in school. For instance in most Nigerian public schools, in spite of the conceding of such policy in the educational curriculum, life skills are not given the most attention they need. This is because sessions related to such activities are deliberately ignored for other conventional school activities. (Mohammed et. al. 2021). This non-adherence to this policy formed the motivation for this study. That is, to assess the adherence of basic life skills activities in Northern Nigeria with contextual consideration on Kebbi State. Thus, to achieve this objective, the study, comprises four more sections. That is section two which contain the review of relevant pieces of literature; section three contains the mode the research was carried ; section four has the data presentation, analysis and findings and the last section comprise the summary, conclusion and recommendations based on the findings from the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Literature

Life skills are identified as a link between motivating factors of knowledge, attitude, values, and behaviour reinforcement. Challenges that are faced by youths are usually psychological, social as well as economic. These major problems are the outcomes of the different factors such as the

changes in facial development at puberty, lack of positive and negative media influence, and social programming in compliance with stereotypes in society as well as an inadequate source of information. It is further stated that life skills comprise competencies that can enable the youth to handle life challenges and manage their lives from a positive perspective. A growing mind is being viewed, as one of the most fecund members of society, due to their physical and mental capability. There are real scenarios where they are not able to make use of their potential well due to lack of adequate guidance and motivation. Social problems vary from alcoholism, drug abuse, corruption, sexual abuse, smoking, juvenile delinquency, anti-social acts, etc. It can be considered harmful to them and others too, to a large extent. Tikly and Barrett (2011) define good quality education as Education that provides all learners with the capabilities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance an individual. There are learning outcomes that are required, and it varies according to context but the result of the basic education sequence must consist of at least a threshold quantity of literacy and numeracy as well as life skills.

2.1.1 Stylised Facts about Basic Life Skills:

2.1.1.1 Basic Life Skills as the ability to do Something Well.

Foremost we analyze 'skill' and 'life skills,' although there is a need to understand the terms and how these ideas are explained in various studies. The terms 'skill' and 'competency' are commonly caved in, but in the past, the word 'skill' referred to the ability to undertake a task in the context of work and the skilled worker was trained (Bonie, 2014). Skill can be focused on either the manual skills that means being involved with physical psychomotor abilities or mental cognitive abilities (Winterton et al., 2006).

The word 'cognitive skills' over time has traditionally been used to refer to processes that happen in the brain to understand something well. Cognitive skills are activities such as problem-solving, reasoning, thinking, assessing, concluding and include the mental processes of analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Westera, 2011). Recent research has brought the idea of 'embodied cognition – that the brain is part of a broader system that involves perception and action as well (Shapiro, 2007). Skills are related to the completion of specific tasks (driving, solving problems) and frequent involvement is often required to improve performance.

One of the simplistic precision of life skills is to 'be able to do life well.' But most times, it refers to skills that help a person through everyday tasks and to be active and engaged members of a community (Murphy-Graham & Cohen, 2022). According to the World Health Organization as reflected in Chaudhary and Mehta (2012), Life Skills refer to capacity for adaptive and positive behaviour that enables an individual to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of every day. "Life Skills," based education has been considered more essential over numerical and literacy skills. The life skills area is not only linked to the pedagogy of active learning, but also addresses the balance between knowledge, attitude, and skills (Central Board of Secondary Education, 2013).

2.1.1.2 Basic Life Skills and Life Skills Education.

Life skills training/ education is concerned with psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that assist students to be able to make the right decisions, solve problems, think creatively, learn to communicate effectively, build healthy relationships/friendships, empathize with others, and cope with managing their self healthily and productively. Another commonly used definition of 'life skills' comes from the World Health Organization. "*Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life*" (WHO, 1995). Kumar and Chhabra, (2014) conceptualise Life skills as personal actions toward others, as well as toward actions to change the surrounding environment to make it conducive to health (WHO Health Report as reported in Kumar and Chhabra, 2014). In addition, global organisations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and WHO list the ten core Life Skills as Self-awareness, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, problem-solving, effective communication,

interpersonal relationship, empathy, coping with stress, and coping with emotion (Mohammed et al. 2021).

2.1.1.3 Life Skills Program

Life Skills programs are also designed to educate a wide scope of social and behavioral skills which is also referred to as “soft” or “non-cognitive” skills—that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands of everyday life. These life skill programs can help build on any or all of the following skills:

- Decision-making (e.g. censorious and creative thinking, and problem-solving);
- Community living (e.g. effective communication, resisting peer pressure, building healthy relationships, and conflict resolution);
- Personal awareness and management (self-awareness, self-esteem, managing emotions, assertiveness, stress management, and sexual and reproductive health behaviours and attitudes).

Life skills programs can guide learners to enable them to think critically about how gender norms, human rights govern and influence their interactions with others and how it affects their behaviours. These skills can be particularly important during adolescence, which is filled with new feelings, physical and emotional changes, excitement, questions, and difficult decisions. This time the differences between young men and women become more pronounced and gender norms take an intense hold in the control of young people’s aspirations and behaviours. Unfortunately, not much is known about how malleable these skills are at different ages or if there are important differences across the sexes.

However, it is generally conceded that these skills can be increased at least up until the end of the teenage years¹ and that they are essential for both genders Life skills programs is not just providing information. It is more than that, although it is relevant to deliver adequate information and to reinforce such knowledge periodically, this alone is rarely enough to motivate people to change behaviour. Life skills programs aim to improve young peoples’ abilities and motivations to make use of all the different types of information. The viewpoint should also be made interactive, making use of role-plays, games, puzzles, group discussions, and a variety of different teaching techniques to keep the participant fully involved in the sessions.

2.2 Empirical Findings:

Previous studies carried out by individuals and organisations have revealed the vital role that basic life skills play in the mental and economic well-being of students. For instance, Bonnie (2014) revealed that students without life skills education will become lost because of the inexorable pressure created by globalization. Also, UNDP (2017) and UNESCO (2014) makes it important for schools to observe and practice some sets of life skills as that will help to advance competencies and empower students to be independent at an early part of their lives. In Nigeria, Okey-Orji and Ekenedo (2019), revealed how life skills can help in reducing some domestic violence in Nigeria; while Mohammed et al. (2021) established that life skills can empower youth and help improve their economic well-being and help increase the growth level of the economy.

3. Research Methodology

The survey was carried out and adopted qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. The data were collected during the Kebbi state survey in June 2021 (Skills Outside School Kebbi State Baseline Report, 2021). They consist of the survey questionnaires, focus group discussion, interviews, flash drive, and a memory card containing pictures and videos of survey activities managed by the State field officer who ensured daily collection of survey tools for safekeeping. Power BI software is adopted for data analysis to arrive at quite pertinent findings.

3.1 Purpose of the Study and Sampling type.

This survey investigates the widely reported lack of basic life skills in Northern Nigerian with a contextual focus on Kebbi State, North-Western Nigeria to ascertain the rate of lack of basic life

skills among secondary school adolescents while suggesting and strategizing on possible solutions. Specifically; the study is poised to; Evaluate, determine and suggests possible ways in which Life skills can be improved in Nigeria. The purposive sampling technique was adopted to capture the necessary target population(principals, teachers and studnets) and to obtain valid response.

4. Data Presentation, Interpretation and Research Findings.

4.1 Questionnaire Distribution and retrieval

The number of questionnaires that were distributed and collected back was as follows: 672 respondents, 12 schools and communities across Jega and Birnin Kebbi LGA; Students: 504; Parents: 48, Teachers: 60 (5 questionnaires per school); Principals/ Vice Principals: 24; Community Leaders- 36; Percentage of students: 60.2% Male and 39.8% Female; Parents: 92% Male and 8% Female.

4.2 Research Findings:

Feedback from the survey carried out on the principals and teachers on the extent of students' exposure to life skills show that; 50% of principals answered in the affirmative (figure 4a), and only 55% of teachers agree it is a subject or topic taught in the schools (figure 4b).

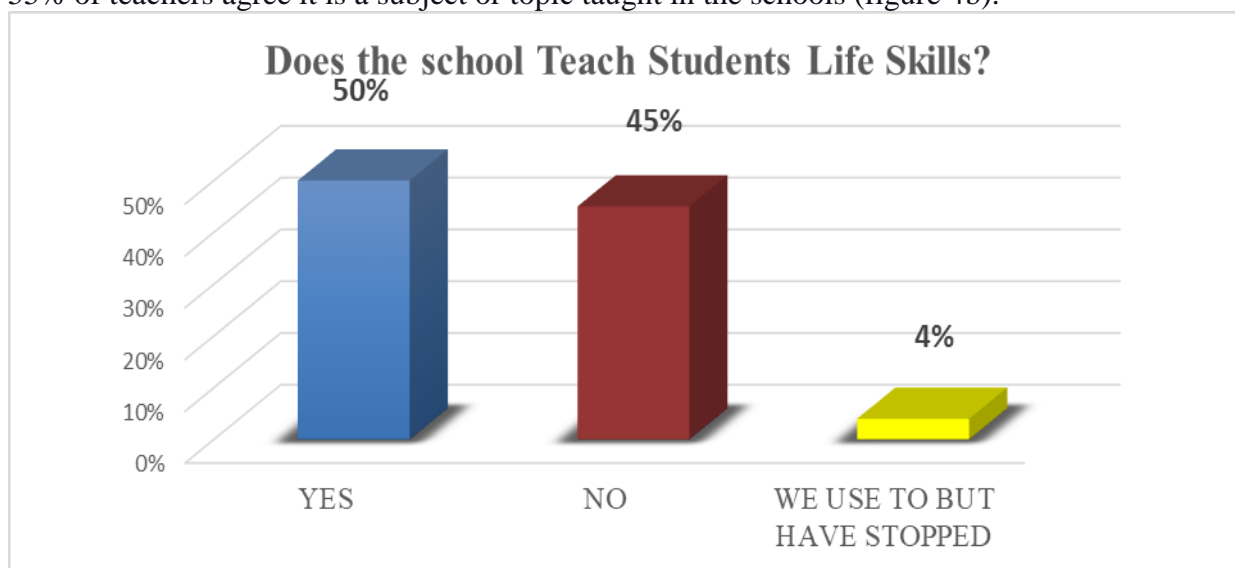


Figure 4a Source: Author’s computation using data from Kebbi State baseline survey, 2021.

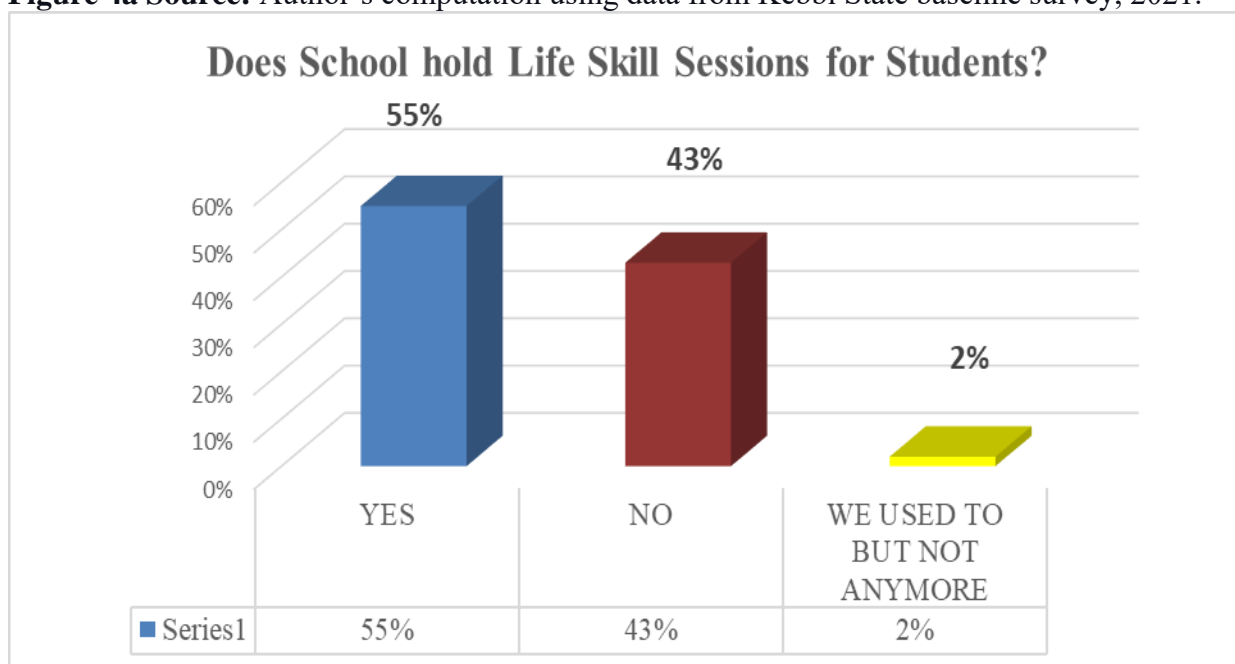


Figure 4b. Source: Author’s computation using data from Kebbi State baseline survey, 2021.

However, 80% of the students said they are taught life skills in school. Is this an indication that students do not know the meaning of life skills? It would be justifiable to test students’ level of understanding the term life skills.” It is a consideration for future surveys.

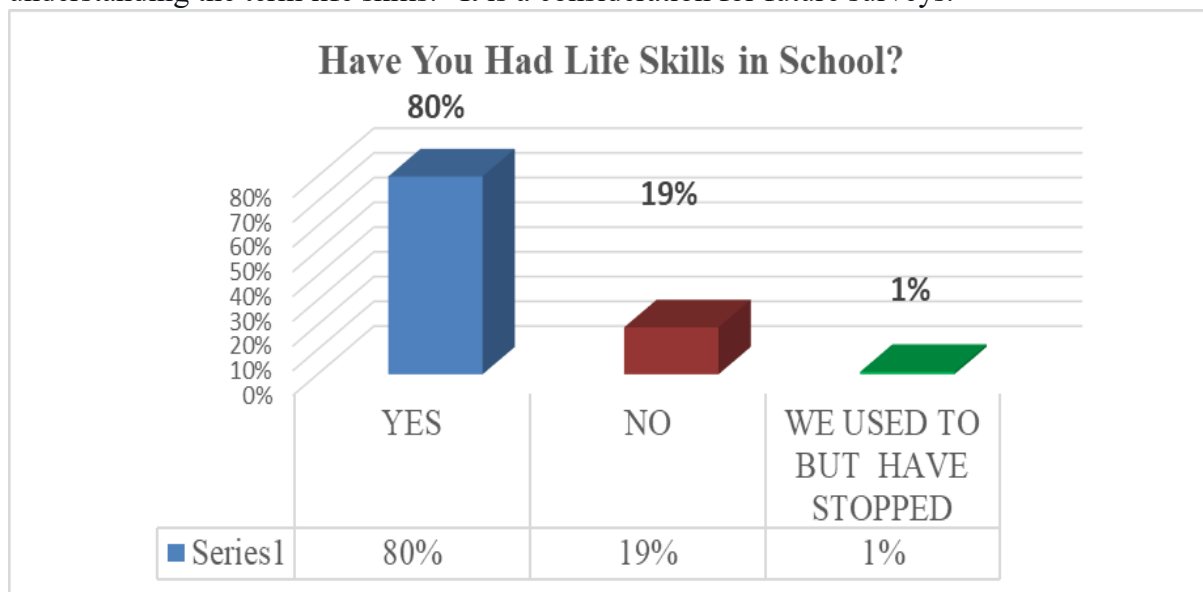


Figure 4c. Source: Author’s computation using data from Kebbi State baseline survey, 2021.

The focus on life skills for students in the schools is not enough as only 50% of the principals affirmed that life skills are taught in their schools while 43% of the teachers concur with this. This implies that there is need to improved on the number of session allocated to basic life skills in the state. Meanwhile, from figure 4d, 63% of principals and 59% of teachers affirmed that students are taught computer/ ICT skills in schools. 80% of the students confirmed they are taught ICT in school. This can also help improve their level of creativity and awareness about the digital world and can help then know the areas they can deploy their basic life skills efficiently.

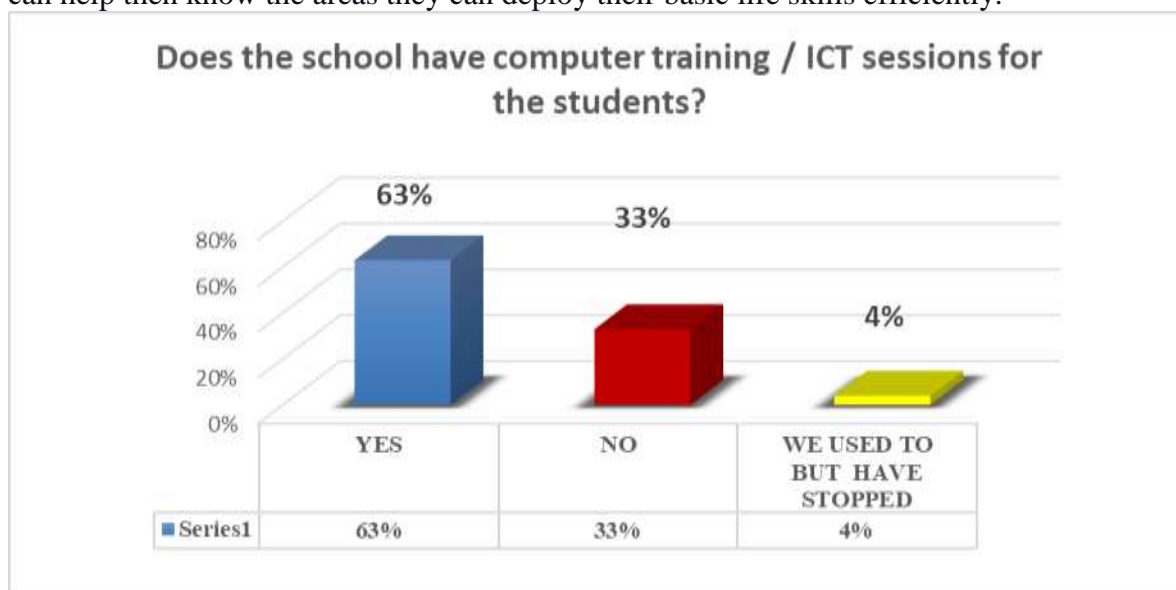


Figure 4d Source: Author’s computation using data from Kebbi State baseline survey, 2021.

5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations:

The study attempt to evaluate, determine and suggest the role of basic life skills in Northern Nigeria. Evidence from the result of the study, it is established that 80% of the students are taught life skills in school, however, there is a need to be better on the session for life skills as 43% of the teachers

affirmed no to basic life skill sessions in the examined schools. Thus from the findings, the following recommendations were made:

The government through its agencies(Ministry of Education and other partners) should monitor to ensure that every student especially in secondary school is taught one or two life skills before graduating as it will go a long way to close endemic skill gaps and improve the employability potentials of secondary school leavers. Also, since life skills are regarded as non-cognitive skills, there is a requirement for teachers to be properly trained and be well acquainted with varieties of life skills to assist in sharing their knowledge to students with ease as this will help to improve the productivity and earnings of most people in the developing countries like Nigeria. Lastly, there is a need for general inspection to schools to assess the number of sessions they allocated to ICT as this will improve and expose most students to different trends of unknown innovations that they can apply to solve a problem within their community vis-à-vis society.

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APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX 1: List of Selected Schools in Kebbi State that questionnaires were administered.

Locations	List of Secondary Schools	Life Skills Activities
Kebbi State, Nigeria.	ADGSS	Sporting, Debate and Spelling bee activities.
	ADSSB	Quiz and Debate
	GDSS DUNBEGU	Spelling bee and Sports
	GDSS JANDUTSTI	Quiz and Debate
	GDSS JEGA(BOYS)	Press Club and Sports
	GDSS JEGA(GIRLS)	MSS, Quiz, Debate and Press Club
	GDSS KIMBA	Sports and Quiz
	GDSS KOLA	MSS, Quiz and Debate
	GDSS OKE	Spelling Bee
	GGSS TUDUN WADA	Sports
	GSC BASAURA	Sports
	HAAS JEGA	Sports, Quiz, Spelling Bee
TOTAL	12 SCHOOLS	