

Life skills competency levels and associated socio-demographic factors among G.C.E O/L students in the Sandilipay Education Division.

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Background: Lack of life skills among adolescents is a barrier to dealing effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. The objective of this study was to assess selected life skills competencies and the influence of socio-demographic factors on these competencies among G.C.E O/L students in the Sandilipay Education Division.

Methodology: This was a descriptive cross-sectional study carried out between August 2016 and May 2018 among G.C.E. O/L students attending schools of the Sandilipay Educational Division. Random cluster sampling was used. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data, which were subsequently analyzed by SPSS. Ethics approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna.

Results: Seven hundred and fifty students participated in the study. Life skills competency levels were satisfactory (mean 67.63, SD \leq 9.542). Students obtained the highest mean for empathy and the lowest for coping with stress. Life skills competency levels among females (68.19%) were higher than among males, and higher among Hindu students (68.04%) than Christians (65.32%). Father's education level was significantly associated with life skill competency levels, but mother's education level was not.

Conclusion: Overall life skills competency levels were quite satisfactory but the competency level for coping with stress was very low. Strategies to cope with stress need to be integrated into the secondary school curriculum and effective counseling programs initiated for students having difficulties coping with stress.

Key words: Life skills competency, secondary school students, socio-demographic factors