Effect of Life skills Training on New Entrant Female students in three Universities in Ethiopia

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Abstract: University students who are efficient in life skills will acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to succeed in their university education and beyond. The overall goal of life skill trainings was to see retention and completion of university education of female students in the sampled universities. The main focus of the intervention was to enhance students' life skills in eleven variables: Self-esteem, Communication Skills, Study Skills, Stress Management, Substance Abuse, Women's/ girls right, Reproductive Health, HIV, Leadership Skill, Job, profession and Career and Mentorship. The objectives of the intervention project were to achieve these goals through improving capacity of female students to succeed in university and through improving capacity of partner universities to support female students. As a result, before life skill training was launched, pre training assessment was conducted in the sampled three universities, sampling a total of 750 female students (250 from each), and then post training assessment was carried out at the end of the training program, only for 494 female students. The training was conducted using university instructors as trainers. The assessment was designed to be a single group comparison of pre-training baseline vs. post- training changes. The quantitative data was used to compare the pre-training assessment with post-training assessment, to measure the achieved results of the life skills of the female students with the eleven variables. The qualitative data were used to independently describe the changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors of female university students and was directly used to complement the quantitative data. The cumulative result shows that the Life skills training have brought significant changes in the life skills of the sampled female students. Students' dropout and dismissal will be reduced; retention and graduation rate will be increased.

Key terms: life skills, female students, assessment, training, self-esteem

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Introduction

According to Dupuy, et al (2018), life skills are the amalgamation of knowledge, skills and attitude, which are not the same, but interdependent. Knowledge refers to what we know, comprehend, apply, analyze and synthesise skill refers to what we have acquired in terms of knowledge, competencies and abilities through systematic effort to carryout complex activities; and attitude refers to what we possess in terms of personality, beliefs, values, behaviors, and motivations. Life skills constitute a set of competencies that enable individuals to familiarize themselves with context, function and succeed in society. Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, skills, and attitudes into specific behavior to cope with, navigate, or transform life's challenges (Dupuy, et al, 2018), this is the goal of the present life skills which is given to female new entrant university students. One of life preparation places is a university setting, which requires learning diverse types of knowledge and skills in formal, non-formal, and informal learning contexts (UNESCO 2004 & 2012; UNICEF 2012), for females students coming from diverse back ground. Life skills training is very important for female university students to successfully function today in their field of study, and after graduation as adults in society. Life skills training help the most deprived female university students, to find the ways, "…*for the social, economic, and political challenges of the 21st century. It also help them to think critically, contribute politically, live peaceful and healthy lives, create and pursue economic opportunities, navigate and use new technologies and process information in ways that translate into positive individual and societal development* (Dupuy, et al, 2018, p. 1).

It is obvious that the involvement of female students in Ethiopian higher education institutions is very important for the country's social and economic development endeavors. Though there is a steady increment of female students' participation in higher education institutions, their achievement in academy does not seem encouraging. This is not due to individual female students weaknesses; rather, it may be because of cultural negative influences on their life skill development. Life skills develop in the family and the community; where the female students live. From the researcher's informal continuous observation for more than twenty years, among the barriers that hinder female students' achievement in their university life include lack of effective communication, poor decision making, maladjustment to the university environment, lack of assertiveness and being influenced by peer pressure as well as gender based violence. These and many other related lack of life skills can deprive female university

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students' success in their education and in their future life after graduation. Success in this sense is when someone is staying in his desired outcomes and experiences, creating wisdom, happiness, and unconditional self-worth along the way (Downing, 2011), that requires life skills. Life Skills teaches skills for an individual to take care of himself and to make plans for his future (Kelly-Plate and Eubanks, 2010).

Life skills are the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (African AIDS Initiative International Inc., 2008). According to theses institution, improving life skills, can improve the performance and achieve success now and in the future. It also improves the chances of landing a high-skill and high-wage job. Life skills training makes a person to transform knowledge, attitude and values into real abilities that he recognizes what to do and how to do it. More specifically, life skills are a set of nucleus abilities sometimes described as emotional intelligence. The ten generic life skills are self-awareness, empathy, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, the ability to manage emotions and cope with stress, creative thinking, critical thinking, decision making, and problem solving (UNICEF, 2012). All of the ten skills are interdependent where none of them stand alone. For example, for communication skills in order to decide what to say and how to say it effectively, one needs self-awareness and empathy (Downing, 2011). However the intervention of the present study focused on Self-esteem, Communication, Study Skills, Stress Management, Reproductive Health, Gender issues, HIV/AIDS, Substance Abuse, Leadership skills, Jobs/Professions and Mentorship experience of the female new entrant university students, which could help the female university students as tools to achieve positive changes.

Why was the present intervention made? Female students may join universities with poor self-esteem. Parents and family might not play crucial role in building the self-esteem of their daughters. As a result, female students may be admitted to universities with little understandings about themselves or who they are, the values they have to employ, the goals they have to set and follow, dreams, and priorities they have to give, so that they can accept themselves and create better interaction with others. With their poor self-esteem, they may be preoccupied with comparing themselves with others, rather than respecting themselves with their own performing differently; they may not credit for what they are and what they have done; they may not have well developed relationships with others. Furthermore, the female students may join university with poor way of trusting, accepting, showing, stretching, sharing, nourishing and being

themselves (Rich, 2008; Kelly-Plate and Eubanks, 2010). These elements of poor self-esteem may affect communication skills, stress management, study skills and other aforementioned life skill components. Of course, the negative effects of these life skills are not unidirectional, rather they are multidirectional and interdependent, i.e., one affects the other.

Being unable to use culturally appropriate use of body language; speaking in public clearly, communicating in writing and use of internet age may be the challenges of these new university female students. In study skills, students may have difficulties in setting their goals; lack of aware of the prospects of their goal; lack of identifying the barriers that hinder to achieve the goals; unaware of the learning that they have to prioritize; difficulties in identifying a person that assist and encourage them; and difficulties in setting their plan of action to achieve the goals. Stress management is one of the difficult areas for new university students. Getting organized, planning ahead, dividing tasks and conquering, seeking assistance may not be the causes of their stress. The students may also be exposed to alcohol, khat, tobacco and other drugs that can have harmful effects on their body and mind, particularly for young people (Rich, 2008; Kelly-Plate and Eubanks; 2010; Barbara, 2010; Downing, 2011; Abdulrahman, 2011).

Furthermore, female students may not understand their gender role, their rights and others' right, as well. Most importantly, they need to know the risks associated with different types of sex and the strategy to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS. Female students may also lack leadership skills; influencing or motivating others for common goals, following positive role model or being a role model for others. In addition to all these, the female students may not benefit from mentors, parents and peers where they are expected to get valuable information and guidance. Receiving these valuable information and guidance can help them to stay in the university more likely, take care of themselves, and be successful today and in future activities, such as leading a family, being a community leader, or having a job. Finally, the female students may face discouragement from pursuing a career and from studying certain subjects that will help them attain particular jobs, especially ones not traditionally associated with women.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYAS) of Ethiopia developed in 2008 a National Framework for Life Skill Training, in collaboration with UNICEF. This framework identifies four broad categories of life skills that reflect the fundamental developmental needs of young persons in general, as well as the specific demands of grown-ups in Ethiopia: first, personal skills (including cognitive skills like critical thinking and problem solving, socio-cognitive-emotional skills, and personal management skills); second, interpersonal skills (such as communication and interdependence skills); third, group skills (including the ability to cooperate with others); and fourth, what are labeled as "ecosystem" skills (that is, societal and situation management skills) (Dupuy, et al, (2018)). However the implementation of this framework was not assessed and its effects were not known. The challenges in relation to life skills can be assessed, be reversed by intervention and re-assessed to measure the outcome of the changes, which is the aim of the present study.

These particular challenges of females in developing countries were confirmed in a study by Dupuy, et al, (2018). They described that young women have challenges in advancing socially, politically, and economically, due to poverty and gender-based discrimination. According to these authors the life skills trainings, positively influenced psycho-social and attitudinal changes, health, relationships with other people, and help to develop important economic and cognitive skills. In Ethiopia, there are few studies in relation to life skills training of female university students, and I couldn't find a study with the application of life skills intervention. For all these reasons, it was found important to carry out baseline survey, conduct intervention, and assessment after the intervention (Rich, 2008; Kelly-Plate and Eubanks; 2010, Downing; 2011). All the above assumptions needs to be supported with evidence from empirical study, which was the purpose of the current study. The study is expected to have a significant contribution for further research, to advance knowledge and skills about life skills assessment, intervention and its impacts.

Statement of the problem

Life in the 21st century is more demanding than ever for today's youths, especially for the young women of Ethiopia. Psychological push factors such as the inability to tackle emotional pain, conflicts, frustrations and anxieties about the future, peer pressure and sexual curiosity, are often the driving force for high-risk behavior, where female university students may be challenged. Particularly, the aforementioned life

skills selected for the intervention were found to be the major life skills gap among new female students in higher education institutions. It is observed that significant number of female students in higher education institutions lack life skills that help them to move towards success in their academy and in future social life. Innovative skills may be lacking to enable young females to adapt and secure a quality life in their stay in the university and promising future life for themselves. Life skills development is, therefore, a critically important for deprived female students.

University students who acquire positive life skills will acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to succeed in their university education and beyond. In order to achieve the project goal, one of the areas of intervention is life skills training and mentoring services to benefit young university women. The life skills training for new entrant female students of Addis Ababa, Jimma and Adama Universities, was one of the focused major project activities. Female students' ability to possess positive life skills was believed to enable them to succeed in their university study. As it was about developing skills, the training was delivered continuously during the female students' first year university stay. In order to evaluate the project's contributions, regarding female students' ability to adopt positive life skills, pre and post life skill training assessment were administered. The intervention was conducted to a total of 750 newly admitted female students in the three universities (250 from each). The purpose of the present study was to know the status of life skills before they join university and the effect of life skill training on female students, based on the following basic research questions:

1. What is the status of baseline life skills of the new entrant female students in three universities?

2. Did the training bring significant changes on the life skills of the new university female students?

3. Did the training bring significant changes on the academic achievement of the new university female students?

Methods

The methods included research design, sources of information, tools, procedures, data analysis and ethical issues. Each is described below.

Research Design

The above research questions necessitated a mixed methods research design. Primarily quantitative and qualitative data were required to answer the question of baseline: What is the status of baseline life skills of the girls. Quantitative and qualitative data were also used to answer the second question: Did the training bring significant changes on the life skills of the girls? The last question was answered mainly by quantitative data: Did the training bring significant changes on the academic success of the new university entrant female students? The design of this research, beyond using the basic research questions, aimed at confirming or disconfirming the hypothesis. The hypothesis of this evidence based training was that new entrant female students receiving instructors-mediated-intervention will make significant positive progress in the knowledge and application of life skills: Self-esteem, Communication, Study Skills, Stress Management, Reproductive Health, Gender issues, HIV/AIDS, Substance Abuse, Leadership, Jobs/Professions and Mentorship. The assessment was designed to be a single group comparison of pre-training baseline vs. post- training changes:

Pre-training Baseline Assessment ⟶ Training ⟶ Post-training Assessment

The main aim of this pre and post training assessment was to test whether life skills training offered during the whole academic year resulted in significant changes on the female students, in the three sampled universities. More specifically, the quantitative data assessment includes the eleven variables of the students, before they took training and after the training. The qualitative methods were used to explore their lived experiences before and after the training, and their academic achievements were also explored. Primarily, baseline data was collected before the training was offered. The training was conducted using university instructors as trainers, and then post training assessment was carried out using the same quantitative instruments used during the pre-training assessment. In addition to the quantitative data, individual interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted to supplement the quantitative survey with qualitative information on knowledge and attitudes; whether different kinds of life skills training have brought changes on the students.

Source of information

As it is depicted in the scope of the work, 250 new female students were recruited from each of the three universities, i.e. a total of 750 students in the institute of technology, college of natural sciences and some students with disabilities in social science streams

were the sources of the base line quantitative assessment. The sampling was conducted by the project as a target, for support in the University Success Program (USP), supported by USAID. The sample was a target of the USP, for the capacity building that includes life skills training, skills training of English language for academic purpose, mentorship, academic and hygienic kit support.

The 750 students selected by USP were considered for both pre and post training assessment. Further, six female students were selected for semi-structured interviews, two from each university; from among the 750 sampled female students in the project. A group of female students, from each university (8-12 students) were also considered for Focus Group Discussions (FGD), from the same targeted group, during pre and post training assessment. The sample for both individual interviews and FGD was selected, based on the following criteria, for newly female university entrants:

1. First year female students coming from urban, rural and semi-rural areas

2. Students who were mainly assigned to Science and Technology field of study

3. Students with disabilities in any field

4. Students who came from emerging regions in any field

Using these criteria, six new (two from each university) female university students were interviewed for a total of six hours, one hour for each and 36 (12 from each university were selected for focus group discussion, for a total of three hours. The data were collected by the researcher taking note. During this posttest assessment 494 students completed the questionnaire. The remaining 256 did not fill out the questionnaire for multiple reasons. Some had dropped out from the training, some were transferred to other universities and some were on academic probation, being away from their respective academic program in the university.

Tools for the assessment

The assessment instrument was developed by the researcher, validated and ethical clearance was secured, before pre training data collection was launched. During the pre-training assessment, the aforementioned 750 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and all returned; but during data entry, some were found incomplete; whereas, during the posttest, only 494 copies were distributed and collected. The assessment was university-based and data were gathered in relation to the sampled students' life skills

development. To observe the changes in life skills of the students, a mixed approach (which make use of both quantitative and qualitative data) was used.

Quantitative Instrument

The same quantitative instruments was employed to measure the variables that related to Self-esteem, Communication, Study Skills, Stress Management, Reproductive Health, Gender/Girls' Rights, HIV/AIDS, Substance Abuse, Leadership, Jobs/Professions and Mentorship. The instruments were used as baseline data and also used for post training assessment, to measure the effects of the training. More specifically, the instruments included the following.

Variables	Number of Items/questions
Self-esteem	31
Communication skills	16
Study skills	33
Stress management	9
Substance abuse	10
Women's/girls right	11
Reproductive health	13
HIV	8
Leadership skill	9
Job, profession and career	7
Mentorship	9
Total 1	56

The scale for all the 156 items was answered on a 4–point scale as follows: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; and 4 = strongly agree.

Qualitative Instruments

The purpose of the qualitative instrument was to obtain the necessary data to what extent the training had brought changes in the life skills of the female students. To explore the above issue, the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were developed and employed as an elaborative and complementary match to the quantitative data to understand the changes achieved in life skills. Both instruments were developed specifically based on the USP training modules prepared for the intervention.

Procedure of the assessment

The main procedures of the assessment were the following:

- Administering pre-training assessment to female students in the three universities

- Giving life skills training to the students for one semester

- Conducting post training assessment of female students of the three Universities

- Analyzing the post training assessment in comparison with pre-training result

- Comparing their attendance in the training and their achievements

- Writing the final report comparing pre-and post-training assessment results

Data analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data analysis were used. The quantitative data were used to compare the pre-training assessment with post-training assessment, to measure the achieved result of the life skills of the female students with the aforementioned eleven variables and their sum scores. Paired samples t-test was used to see the changes. The qualitative data were used to independently describe the changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors of female university students, regarding the relevant life skills, and directly complemented the quantitative data.

Once the data collection was completed, the data was coded and entered into a database for analysis. The SPSS version 21 for the windows program was used in both pre and post assessments. The post training assessment results were independently analyzed, using mean and paired t-test to show the magnitude of the changes achieved in life skill development of female students in relation to all the items of the eleven variables and their cumulative scores. The mean of sum of the 156 items x 4 scale was used to summarize the result for the eleven variables. The comparison was computed in two forms: the no report and the yes reports, to see whether the ratings of the no report statement have declined and whether the yes report has strengthened. The result was summarized and concluded, showing the changes of life skill development of the female students. Chronbach's Alpha was also used to measure the reliability of instruments in the assessment. Finally, the findings were presented systematically, discussed and analyzed. Furthermore, the overall score of each student case summary was also listed and annexed with the result to see individual students' changes as a result of the training, in their life skills development. Their attendance of the training was also compared with their achievements. In addition, qualitative data on the post- training of life skills of the new female students were collected, transcribed, categorized, linked to the quantitative data, analyzed and summarized.

Ethical Issues

Ethical standards were reviewed and considered in the design, implementation and reporting of the findings, to make sure that the assessment was conducted in a way that meets the expected ethical standards. At the minimum, the following steps were taken: First, the assessor clearly communicated the purpose of the assessment to all sample respondents. The assessor then informed the respondents that (1) participation in the assessment would be based on their full consent, (2) the data would be used only for the purpose of capacity building (evidence-based training), and (3) information would be used without the name of the respondents attached to it (that is, anonymously). Names of the individual students would be used only to refer to the result of the assessment and then provided relevant training and support to enhance the life skill developments. However, no name was mentioned in this report. Overall, the respondents were informed about their rights and were told that they could withdraw it, if they did not wish to participate in the study or to withdraw at any point in the data collection process. Oral informed consent was secured for surveys, interviews and focus group discussions. Further, local Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (ethical clearance) was granted for the baseline, from the College of Health Sciences of Addis Ababa University.

Result

The post training data were collected from 494 (65.9%) new female entrants at the college of technology and natural sciences of the three universities. The number of the copies of the questionnaire distributed for students were 250 for each of the three universities, during the pre-training assessment. But during the post training assessment data collection from the sampled students was challenging due to several factors such as absenteeism, drop out from the program, engagement in their study and the like. As a result, the number of the copies collected from each university could not be the same as it was during the pre-training assessment. This is displayed in the table 1 below. Further, there was some missing of ratings for the variables, because in some cases, students submitted incomplete data.

Table 1: Sample size

University	N (%)	Missing data
Addis Ababa University	177 (70.8%)	73 (29.2%)
Adama STU	142 (56.8%)	108 (43.2 %)
Jimma University	174 (69.6%)	76 (30.4%)
Total	494 (65.9)	256 (33.1)

The data were entered into SPSS version 21 and analyzed. In the analysis, it was found that there was some missing data. Some students did not respond to some questionnaires.

Some students skipped particular questions for unknown reasons. In the analysis the missing data was, therefore, excluded from the calculation. Calculation was done only with those who filled out the data. Further, t test was conducted to see the pretest difference. If significant differences had been found during the pretest period, between those who filled and who missed post training assessment could have affected the post training assessment result. This means the decreased sample size could have impact on the post training result. But if there is no significant difference during the pre-training assessment, the missed 256 copies of questionnaire do not have negative effect on the pre and post training assessment comparison of the result. On the other hand, within the collected number of questionnaires of the post training assessment, the comparison is still valid.

Table 2: Comparison of missed and received data

Data	N	Mean	Sig
Missing	256	420.2756	.857
Filled	494	424.2102	

As can be seen from the table above, the pre-training assessment result of the students was not found to have significant difference, so this does not affect the comparison.

Self-esteem

Table 3. Pre - Post Training Status of Girls on Self-esteem

	Pre training assessment result		Post training assessment result	
Variable	Yes Report %	No Report %	Yes Report %	No Report %
Self-esteem	60	40	85	15

During the pretest 40% of the students were found to be with low self-esteem. This means, there were significant number of students who did not have positive self-esteem and needed some kind of intervention in order to enhance their self-esteem. The intervention resulted in the decline of the 40% negative to 25% and the positive self-esteem enhanced to the level of 85% of the students. The cumulative self-esteem assessment result during pre and posttest was compared with paired samples test. The result showed that there were significant changes. As can be seen from the table below, there was strong evidence that the self-esteem training conducted in the three universities changed the life skill and behavior of the students. There were two kinds of items in the questionnaire: Analyzing the negatively-worded and positively-worded items of the same construct separately is not a recommended way of analysis. Through reverse scoring the author(s) can convert the negatively-worded items to positively-

worded items and thus can add the two sets of statements and have one total score for self-esteem. The training organized by USP helped them and negative self-esteem declined significantly (t=19.092, p=.000) and students developed positive self-esteem. Further, the positive statements students rated also showed significant improvement (t=-4.717, p=.000). This means the students rated positively for the statements. For more visual understanding, please look at *table 4 below.*

Table 4. Paired Samples Statistics for communication skills

		Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	t	p
Pair 1	NSEPRET	19.5099	4.79776	4.41852	19.092	.000
	NSEPOST	14.6346		2.68934		
Pair 2	PSEPRET	69.0383	-2.56637	8.68354	-4.717	.000
	PSEPOST	71.6047		9.46420		

Generally, the training offered to students on self-esteem brought significant change and these in turn helped in the development of other life skills. These changes are important for the students to create positive relationships and improve their daily academic performances. Positive self-esteem could help students stay in the university and finally be successful in their education.

The qualitative data gathered through interviews and focus group discussions also confirmed the positive results. Among the six interviewed, all reported that the training was so important and brought changes in their self-esteem. For example, one of the interviewees said:

> "I benefitted from the life skill training at large. I was assigned to the department of not my choice, Department of Physics. I was so much scared of physics and intended to drop out, but the life skill training gave me the power of 'You can!' and able to stay in the University."

Another student also added and said: "Due to the life skill training I am given, I discovered my potential and I understand that I can be influential for myself and others. I am confidence in myself, work hard and be successful". In general, all the six interviewees reflected that the training on self-esteem changed their life skills significantly. They disclosed that the training helped them to practice their potential and talents with assertive behavior. The focus group discussions also strongly confirmed the results described by the interviewees. The three FGD conducted in the three universities clearly explained that when they arrived at their universities, they were much scared

and threatened by the negative rumors they had heard. Fortunately, they were received by USP at their arrival, introduced to university life, offered training, mentored, and now they fully developed self-confidence.

Communication Skills

Table 5. Pre - Post Training Status of Girls on communication skills

Variable	Pre training assessment result		Post training assessment result	
	Yes Report %	No Report %	Yes Report %	No Report %
Communication skills	61	39	83	17

In the pretest assessment, a significant number of the students (39%) had difficulties in communication that could challenge them in their academic process during their stay in the universities. It was recommended that these students be given intervention that might help them to improve their English language skill, so that they could improve their academic performance and prolong their stay in the university. The intervention helped to reduce negatives from the 39% to 17% and enhance the positive communication skills to 83%. This means there was a change in communication skills by 22%.

The communication skills assessment result during pre and post training assessment was computed with paired samples test. The result indicated that the communication skill of the students significantly improved. For example, for the students that were rated as being too shy to speak in public; after the training, this behavior decreased at large. As it is displayed in table 6 below, there was very strong evidence that the undesirable communication skills rated by the students during the pretest dramatically declined during the posttest (t=30.780, p=.000). In addition to this, students who disagreed with positive statements, for example, 'I listen well' and other variables, significantly improved (t=-7.230, =.000) during posttest assessment.

Table 6. Paired Samples Statistics for communication skills

		Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	t	p
Pair 1	NCSPRET	6.7562	3.03132	1.89549	30.780	.000
	NCSPOST	3.7248		.85908		
Pair 2	PCSPRET	37.2764	-2.40650	5.66737	-7.230	.000
	PCSPOST	39.6829		4.68517		

In addition to the above quantitative analysis, the interview of the six female students also confirmed the result displayed above, statistically. Since they are coming from diversified language backgrounds, students reflected that they have serious

communication problems, as one of the interviewees disclosed: *"At the beginning we were communicating in some body movement where mutual understandings were little or no. But the training we received has changed us towards positive direction in our relation and communication"*. Further, another interviewee said*:*

> Those who did not speak Amharic language changed their attitude, showed curiosity and practiced Amharic. By now there is no significant problem in communication. Besides, our English skills have also improved. During our stay in the University, our language skills will be promoted to the highest level.

Added to this, another student said:

> Further, the training makes us to avoid shyness, communicate assertively, speak loudly in public, ask questions in classrooms and establish positive relations, create friendship, tolerate misunderstandings, solve conflicts and establish mutual respect and understandings with all people in the dorm, classroom and elsewhere.

The data obtained from FGD also strengthened these findings. All the three FGD groups confirmed that they improved a lot in their communication skills. They said that they were not too shy to speak in public; they improved their speaking, writing, listening and reading skills in English language.

Study skills

Table 7. Pre - Post Training Status of Girls on study skills

Variable	Pre training assessment result		Post training assessment result	
	Yes Report %	No Report %	Yes Report %	No Report %
Study skills	53	47	77	**23**

During the pretest assessment, the students (47%) replied that they lacked basic study skills. The training on study skill helped the students to improve the skills. Their poor study skills declined from 47% to 23% and positive skills enhanced from 53% to 77%. This means the students reported that there were a change by 24%, in their communication skills. The table below indicate that the negative experiences of the students, such as lack of motivation, diverting attention while studying and studying in disruptive behavior significantly improved (t=9.606, p=.000). The positive behavior such as goal setting, programming and the like has increased (t= -2.140, p=.033)

Table 8. Paired Samples Statistics for Study Skills

		Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	T	Sig (2 -tailed)
Pair 1	NSSPRET	6.5235	1.02582	1.79559	9.606	.000
	NSSPOST	5.4977		1.59742		
Pair 2	PSSPRET	88.3432	-1.50165	10.44321	-2.140	.033
	PSSPPOST	89.8449		9.79892		

The qualitative data obtained through interviews with six students revealed that all of them developed very important study skills, as a result of the life skills training. One of the interviewees stated that the study skill training helped her at large: "Now I changed my traditional way of study and employed good strategies, highly motivated and can study longer hours, without being bored." The other students also explained how the study skills training was so important for her: *"I set goals and well planned and use my time appropriately. I know where to study, work hard, when to take break and relax using humor with my friends. I learned 'yes! I can!'.* The data from FGD also indicated in similar ways that the training on study skill was the most relevant and important for them. The traditional ways of studying did not help them much in the past. The students knew only limited strategies when they were in high school, but now they are familiar with multiple and effective ways of academic studies.

Stress management

Table 9. Pre - Post Training Status of Girls in stress managment skills

Variable	Pre training assessment result		Post training assessment result	
	Yes Report %	No Report %	Yes Report %	No Report %
Stress Management	60	40	75	**25**

In the pretest assessment, it was discovered that a significant number of the students (40%) lacked stress management skills. If these students continue living with stress, their daily life and their academic performance may negatively affected. Following the pre training assessment, intervention was conducted. The training on stress management skills helped the students to cope with stresses they experienced. As a result the negative life skills declined by 15%. The table below indicated that their negative experiences of stress significantly decreased (t = 20.308, p =.00) and they developed skill of preventing stress. The positive statement that students rated during the post assessment significantly increased (-t = 2.993, p=.003) towards positive direction. These include their ability to understand what stress means to them, its causes, techniques of reducing stress and how to get assistance whenever they need it.

Table 10. Paired Samples Statistics for Stress Management

		Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	T	Sig (2-tailed)
Pair 1	NSMPRE	10.6039	3.45671	3.22427	20.308	.000
	NSMPOST	7.1472		1.76861		
Pair 2	PSMPRET	14.0231	-47344	2.28105	-2.993	.003
	PSMPOST	14.4965		2.54690		

In addition to the quantitative data, the qualitative data also confirmed that the training

was crucial for the new university entrant students to reduce or avoid stress. According to all interviewees, university is a place where stress is affecting learning and their life. One of the six interviewees, said:

> New environment, academic difficulties, exam, time constraints to study, yearning family, social threats such as the presence of abuse and economic problems are all sources of stress. The training organized by USP has helped a lot to manage and escape from the aforementioned stresses.

Interviewed students during the pre-training assessment disclosed that it was difficult for them to manage stress that arises from different social and physical environments. Another student said:

> Many of us were under stress, but thanks to the training on stress management, we are confident how to prevent, manage and help students who didn't receive the training. I have observed that even some of our senior students are still under stress in many social and academic issues.

Similarly, the FGD also confirmed that the training in stress management helped many students to become free from stress or reduce the intensity of the stress. These included their ability to understand what stress means to them, its causes, techniques of reducing stress and how to get assistance whenever they need it.

Substance abuse

Table 11. Pre - Post Training Status of Girls in avoiding substance abuse

Variable	Pre training assessment result		Post training assessment result	
	Yes Report %	No Report %	Yes Report %	No Report %
Substance abuse	70	30	93.5	**6.5**

In the pre-training assessment, a significant number (30%) of the students agreed with negative statements to abuse substances, such as "it is ok to use drugs…" However, the training organized by USP in the three universities improved the attitudes of the students to reduce substance abuse by 23.5%. It is visible that the training helped the students to change their attitude, but the changes were not found to be statistically significant ($t=.868$, $p=.386$). The positive statement that students rated during the post

assessment increased towards positive direction. Contrary to this, students have agreed more with positive statements such as understanding the negative effect of drugs. Such attitudes significantly increased (t=3.519, p=.000) towards the positive direction.

Table 12. Paired Samples Statistics for Substance abuse

		Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Pair 1	PSAPRET	19.3212	8.25268	205.43672	.868	.386
	PSAPOST	11.0685		1.23069		
Pair 2	NSAPRET	10.0000	.73903	4.09946	3.519	.000
	NSAPOST	9.2610		3.01597		

In focus group discussions and as the interviewees disclosed many were aware of male students abusing substances, particularly chewing khat, smoking tobacco and drinking alcohol. However, female students reported that they did not feel as vulnerable as males to substance abuse, though they were aware of some female students who used/abuse substances for various purposes. One of the students said:

> Fortunately, I have never seen fresh students abusing substances. The training has changing our wrong thinking about Khat, where many students are abusing too much as an instrument during study, to reduce sleepy behavior, strengthen concentration, and enhance the level of their memory. The training has underlined the disadvantages of the substance, in psychological, social and academic skills. Hence, the fresh students who received the training are very much far away from such substances.

The FGD in the three universities also confirmed the above statement. All these together are good indicators that the training has brought positive attitudinal changes in the students with regard to substance abuse.

Gender Issues

Table 13. Pre - Post Training Status of Girls in stress managment skills

Variable	Pre training assessment result		Post training assessment result	
	Yes Report %	No Report %	Yes Report %	No Report %
Gender issues	57	43	77	23

During the pre training assessment, 43% of the students showed poor life skills in relation to gender issues. Following the training, 20% of the students understanding of gender issues improved. With reference to table 16, we can see that there was a change but that it was not found to be significant (t = 474, p =.636).

Table 14. Paired Samples Statistics for Women's Right

		Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Pair 1	WRPRET	31.3366	-14496	4.89618	-474	.636
	WRPOST	31.4816		4.29503		

In relation to the rights of women, one of the interviewed students said:

> The training on gender issues and women's right has provided us with knowledge and skills to stand for ourselves, be assertive and protect ourselves from any abuse that could come any time. Further, the students who have taken the training moved to the level to support those who didn't take the training.

The data obtained from FGD also confirmed that young women increasingly believe they are free to pursue social and economic activities beyond the home. One of the students said: *"In the training process we learned how to identify our strength and weakness and developed the attitude of 'Yes we can!'".* Further, in the FGD all the participants believed that the role of female students is now limited and the knowledge, attitude and skills we acquired from the training must be expanded in the society, not less than male partners. They further believed that poverty of a nation could be due to less participation of female in social and economic activities, outside home. Males are working outside home in development and dynamic environment, whereas; female remain only in home routine activities such as cooking. This hampered equality of men and women. The oppressive culture should be challenged so that the role of male and female should be dynamic and exchanged.

Reproductive health

Table 15. Pre - Post Training Status of Girls in reproductive health skills

Variable	Pre training assessment result		Post training assessment result	
	Yes Report %	No Report %	Yes Report %	No Report %
Reproductive Health	62	38	83	**17**

During the pre-training assessment, 38% of the students, indicated they rated themselves negatively in terms of knowledge and skill in reproductive health. These students agreed with negative behavior such as" I am too shy to discuss sexual reproductive health". However these negative thinking in life skill changed by 21% after the training. Table 16, below shows that their knowledge and skill improved and their rating for negative statements significantly declined (t=14.313, p=.000). Further, their rating for positive statement such as 'I know the consequences of HIV and unsafe sex" significantly increased (t=-3.910, p=.000).

		Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Pair 1	NRHPRET	7.5055	1.93157	2.60328	14.313	.000
	NRHPOST	5.5740		1.65949		
Pair 2	PRHPRET	27.4025	-1.21000	5.53779	-3.910	.000
	PRHPOST	28.6125		5.03595		

In the interview conducted on the issue of sexual reproductive health, many of the sample students reported that they discussed the issue freely with any person. According to one of the sample students, the majority of the students preferred abstinence from any sexual practices and focus on their academic activities, so that vulnerability to HIV and pregnancy is not a threat. According to one of the students:

> The majority of those who took the training organized by USP, know how to secure relationship with others and they maintain their good health. From my personal observation senior students may be much exposed for unwanted sexual practices and HIV.

Further, another sample student said:

> We fully understand the techniques boys trap us by the name of offering tutorial support and then move to abuse, gradually. The students, who took the training developed confidence, avoided shyness, stress and protect themselves from any harassment exerted by boys in the university and outside. We are very much cooperative in many forms to protect each other, through exchange of information. Of course, there are some students who said: 'If I have a plan to go for sex, I will protect myself with condom or limited to one person, I trust most.'

Besides, as reported by the FGD participants their seriousness, confidence and concentration in their academics surprised the male students and they reflected their surprise saying: "This year's female students do not look fresh; by the way where do you come from; Are you from another planet?" He further said: "Because, "We have never seen such behavior of female students who put themselves at a distance and carefully move in the university campus, all the time."

HIV/AIDS

Table 17. Pre - Post Training Status of Girls in HIV/AIDS prevention skills

Variable	Pre training assessment result		Post training assessment result	
	Yes Report %	No Report %	Yes Report %	No Report %
HIV/AIDS	69	31	87	13

During the pre-training assessment 31% of the students rated that they did not have sufficient understanding about HIV/AIDS. As the result of the training, 18% of changes in knowledge on HIV/AIDS were achieved. This means, significant number of students ($t=-5.602$, $p=000$) developed sufficient knowledge and attitude about HIV that could help them to protect themselves.

Table 18. Paired Samples Statistics for HIV

		Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Pair 1	HVPPRET	22.3497		4.52758	-5.602	.000
	HVPOST	23.7296	-1.37995	3.52051		

As participants in the interview and FGD reported the majority of the students who took the training remained committed to their 'no sex before marriage' principle to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS.

Leadership skills

Table 19. Pre - Post Training Status of Girls in Leadership skills

Variable	Pre training assessment result		Post training assessment result	
	Yes Report %	No Report %	Yes Report %	No Report %
Leadership	50.3	49.6	81	19

In the pre training assessment 49.6% of the students rated that they did not have sufficient understanding about leadership skills. This was improved by 30% after the training was completed. Table 20, below shows the training organized by USP enhanced the knowledge of the female students. The post training assessment compared with pre training assessment shows that there was significant change ($t=-6.372$, $p=.000$) of the students' knowledge and attitude to be part of leadership.

Table 20. Paired Samples Statistics for Leadership Skill

		Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	T	Sig (2-tailed)
Pair 1	LSPRET	21.7038	-1.29384	3.60587	-6.372	.000
	LSPOST	22.9976		2.85642		

In response to qualitative interview questions, all the sample students said that they now sufficiently understood the advantages for female students to be in a leadership position. For example: - one of the sample students said:

> Female leadership is important to significantly contribute for the development of the nation, to alleviate poverty. I have already started participation. Now I am a leader of a peace forum in the university". Another sample student also reflected her motivation saying: "I want to be a leader at national level, because I believe now that female can do anything they want and make differences. Hence I can lead an institution from micro to macro level.

Job, Profession and Career

Table 21. Changes in job, professional and career skills

Variable	Pre training assessment result		Post training assessment result	
	Yes Report %	No Report %	Yes Report %	No Report %
Job, professional and career	67	33	84	16

		Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	T	Sig (2-tailed)
Pair 1	PCPRET	20.9721	-93023	4.01561	-4.052	.000
	PCPOST	21.9023		3.53072		

Qualitative data were also collected from six female students to get their views on job, profession and career issues. All of them stated that they could develop CV, write business letter and can search for a job on their own or they had developed an attitude that they could create employment for themselves. However, in the FGD discussion, students from Adama Science and Technology University reflected that the issue of developing CV and writing business letter was not given due emphasis during the training, so their skill was not well developed .

Mentorship

Table 23. Changes in Mentorship skills

	Pre training assessment result		Post training assessment result	
Variable	Yes Report %	No Report %	Yes Report %	No Report %
Mentorship	71	29	85	**15**

During the pre-training assessment, 29% of the sample female students rated that they lacked skills in receiving and giving mentorship, so far. But the training helped and these negative life skills declined by 14%. The pre training data was compared with post training assessment to test the change that resulted from the training organized by USP. Table 24 below indicated that there was significant changes (t=-6.433, p=.000) of their skills in mentorship.

Table 24. Paired Samples Statistics for Mentorship

		Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	T	Sig(2tailed)
Pair 1	MSPRET	27.1340	-1.78164	4.04907	-6.433	.000
	MSPOST	28.9156		4.35808		

In addition, qualitative data were also collected from six female students to explore their experiences on mentorship provided by senior students. The participants of the interview responded that they did not receive strong mentorship from their senior students in their universities. This was because all students were very busy and no one gave attention for others. As a result, the majority of the students received limited support or did not receive any support from their mentors. Despite this, overall negative assessment of mentoring, there were several mentors who were very responsible and provided their services. Some of the students who received the training also started voluntary mentorships of junior students, whenever they saw difficulties among their peer students, as one of the students disclosed: *"I work as a mentor for those who do not yet developed confidence"*

Sum score of the eleven variables of the Life skills
Table 25. Changes in Total Life Skills

	Pre training assessment result		Post training assessment result	
Variable	Yes Report %	No Report %	Yes Report %	No Report %
Sum of life Skills	62	38	83	17

During the pre-training assessment, 62% of the students rated positively while the remaining 38% rated negatively on their overall life skills. These indicated that significant number of students were at risk from lack of life skills. These negative results were reduced by 21% after the training was completed. The sum of the result was categorized into two and compared with the post training assessment. On one side, the sums of pre training assessment negative statement were compared with post training assessment negative statement. On the other side, sum of the pre training positive statement were also compared with sum of positive statement of the post training assessment. As it is displayed in table 26 below, there were strong significant changes on the sum life skills of the students. The pre training undesirable attitude and behavior of the students significantly declined (t=21.278, p=.000) after the training, as evaluated by post training assessment. Students also positively rated for the positive statements so that significant changes were achieved (t = -9.162, p=.000)

Table 26. Paired Samples Statistics for cumulative Life skill

		Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	T	Sig (2-taile)
Pair 1	Nall PRETEST	60.0473	14.60364	10.89740	21.278	.000
	Nall POSTTEST	45.4436		6.67435		
Pair 2	PSUMPRETEST	359.8519	-31.13333	32.56418	-9.162	.000
	PSUMPOSTTEST	390.9852		31.67960		

In general, the cumulative life skill training organized by USP brought significant changes on the part of the students. According to data from FGD conducted in the three universities, the knowledge and practices of life skill improved, the negative experiences declined and the positive results strengthened. From the interview conducted with students and the FGD, it was established that life skill training organized by USP was a very important capacity building program. The entire training package helped the students to develop high self esteem, effective study skills, reduced the level of stress they had had, avoid substance abuse that may affect their life negatively, understaood their role, right and obligation as females, protected themselves from unwanted pregenancy and HIV, developed mutual respect, understood oneself better, enhanced positive communication and English language skills, sensitized the students to do many things they missed in the past, established positive relationships, thought beyond the intended university degree and planned for their future. Further, the life skills training helped the students to think for themselves. In addition, the material provision was very

important for all students in general and the needy students in particulary. It was found to be one of the factors that helped many needy students to reduce their stress and focus on their study.

Level of attendance and their achievement

As can be seen from the table and the plot below, attendance had closely significance difference on the achievement of life skills training. Those who attended 75% of the allotted time and above scored high, the mean of 425.5281. Students who attended between 50-74% of the time, scored much better than those who attended below 50%. This indicates that attendance correlated with the achievement of life skill training.

Table 27. Attendance and the achivment

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig
75 and above	249	425.5181	44.79515	
50-74	182	418.0659	39.49636	.055
Belo 50	58	410.0862	78.39067	
Total	489	420.9141	48.41370	

Figure 1. Attendance and achievement in plot
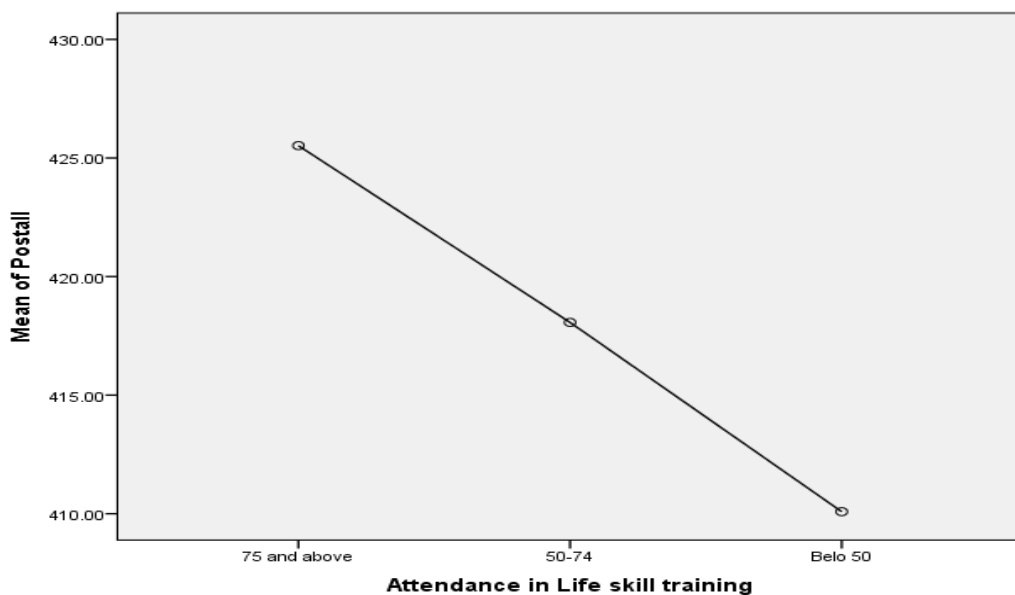
Challenges

From both the interview and FGD, the participants disclosed that all the achivments they mentioned were not without challanges. Time contraint was the biggest challenge students faced. The universities had schduled classes for saturdays and the students were extremelly busy with their classess, study program, cultural and religious issues, during the weekends, the same time the program for life skills training was scheduled.

Effect of Life skills Training on New Entrant Female students…

Particularly, the time for English language program was not found to be convienient for all of the students. But this skill is very important as pointed out by majority of them. As a result, some students dropped out from the training. Time managment was also a major challenge. Both trainees and the trainers were not on time. It seems that there was disorganization in terms of using time effectively by some trainers and some students. Punctuality was the biggest problem. This was the main challange for all the three universities. Further, the participation of mentors in supporting and stablizing their life skills was not encouraging except few cases, as disclosed by the students.

Discussion

It was very difficult to find out research works that describe the magnitude of the life skills problems and their remedies in Ethiopia. The very few existing works suggest that life skills programs are mainly run in urban areas and typically have a narrow thematic focus on health, especially HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence (Kibret 2016). This means female students joining universities for the first time from rural areas may be deprived from these skills. They may not easily adjust themselves to the new university environment. Most of the sampled girls in this study were from rural areas. Life skills are important to meet the needs of individual learners and need to be included in the university education, particularly for those who come from deprived environment. For an individual to grow up positively need personal skills, interpersonal skills, group skills and ecosystem skills (MYAS 2008, 55). Those who are deprived from life skills development can be improved through intervention programs like the intervention program of USP of this study.

The cumulative result of this study shows that the training brought significant changes in the life skills of the sampled female students, in the three universities. The negative perceptions declined significantly (t=21.278, p=.000) and the positive behavior also significantly strengthened (t=-9.162, p=.000). These changes in life skills are very important for an individual to be successful in life (Trilling, Bernie & Fadel 2009). The cumulative pre training assessment finding was 62% with yes report while 38% no report. The post training assessment showed that the yes report further strengthened to the level of 83% and the no report was reduced to 17% and enhanced to positive side by 21%. Except for two variables gender issues and substance abuse; the training had a strong effect on the behavioral changes of all variables in this study. On the substance abuse the negative statements declined but were not found to be significant (t=.868,

Effect of Life skills Training on New Entrant Female students…

p=.386). The same was true for gender issues. There was a change but that is not found to be significant (t=-474, p=.636). On the remaining variables significant changes were achieved due to the training, organized by USP, as strongly expressed by the students. The students pointed out that they had never received any other similar training during their stay in the university. Their self-esteem was changed to the positive direction. This positive self-image can affect their motivation and academic skill and help them become successful in life (Kelly-Plate, Joan and Eubanks Eddye (2010). If they had stayed with low self-esteem, the aforementioned success might not have achieved. The training brought significant change in communication skills that could help students to learn, socialize, work and live with people. If they had serious problems in language and reading skills, study skills could not have been successful. The post training assessment showed that study skills improved as a result of the training. This means the students were better able to set goals, study, take notes, discuss, develop knowledge, take exams and improve their academic performance. A study focused on girl's life skills revealed that life skills training program enabled girls to make positive changes in their lives (Kendra Dupuy, Sosina Bezu, Are Knudsen and Sandra Halvorsen , 2018).

The low levels of awareness on reproductive health issues found during the pre-training assessment now significantly improved. Such changes might be a guarantee for female students to protect themselves from unwanted relationships with unknown and un-trusted partners. Furthermore, as pointed out by Kelly-Plate and Eubanks (2010), such training can help the female students to carefully select a partner who can be trusted and believe in mutual love. Such relationships in turn help the female students to develop high self-esteem, establish trustful relationships in the future and protect oneself from sexually transmitted infection, or HIV/ AIDS. The life skills training on HIV brought significant behavioral change for the students that help them to stay protected and safe.

Another assessed variable was life skills in relation to leadership. The training brought significant attitudinal change on the leadership role of the female students. Such change is very important for women to become models for millions of citizens in all sectors (Trilling, Bernie and Fadel (2009) and become involved in economic, social activities and changes. A sensitized and empowered girl can take over a leadership role without any hesitation and become productive in their performance.

In order to be active and involve in economic and social sectors, female students need to be equipped with skills on how to search for jobs and seek professional and career

development. Fortunately, the training brought significant improvement in preparing CVs, writing business letters, creating networking for the purpose of searching for a job or in creating self-employment. Besides, the mentorship skills also significantly developed among the female students, due to the training. The training brought changes on how to seek and ask for mentorship and how to provide mentorship services for others. Similar study indicated that life skill training has shown a positive outcome (Yadav P, Iqbal N (2009). Implementation of life skill education is also required to meet the demands of today's society. According to these authors, life skill training can addresses the needs of students that can help in motivating, providing practical, cognitive, emotional, social and self-management skills for life adjustments (Yadav P, Iqbal N., 2009)

In general, life skill trainings was essential to promote positive psychosocial development of the students; it enhances coping strategies, developing self-confidence and emotional intelligence, critical thinking, problem solving and decision making skills. If the students are continuously equipped with adapted skills, they can challenge the continuous changing life situations of their society and the world in general.

Conclusion

The purpose of this pre and post training assessment was to investigate the effect of the life skills training organized by USP. With very high reliability (.89) the results of student's life skills significantly improved towards positive direction. The training brought tremendous changes in the life skills of the students. These changes might help the students to learn better and develop academically, socially and psychologically so that they become strong in their stand for themselves and for their society. If the training had not been organized, the fate of the majority of the female students might have been dropout, dismissal and withdrawal. With excellent life skills, students can achieve their goals, remove barriers that may hinder their development and respond to the demands of their community.

Recommendations

The program was excellent according to the students. The life skill training and English language skills must continue for fresh students every year and for all of them until they graduate. For effective implementation of the program:

1. The findings are good indicators that if we support female students, success can be achieved. Hence, I would like to suggest this training continue for the sample universities and also scale up to other universities.

2. University managements should get close to the students, cooperate more with the similar projects, particulary in scheduling training time, create a welcoming environment, access information and follow up for further strength of the program

3. Universities should own the program so that the problems seen in scheduling may be reduced, so that the dropout problems from the training can be handled and many students complete the life skill training.

4. Voluntary mentorship should be encouraged and follow up on mentors' performance must be conducted, to sensitize and encourage them.

5. The training on English language skill was found to be very important, but the schedule was not convienient for the students. As a result many students dropped out from the program. Hence, it is important to see all alternatives of finding an appropriate time for the English language skill training.

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