

Level of Education and Decision-Making Ability of Equivalency Learners

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Abstract: *The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between the educational level and decision-making proficiency among equivalency learners in Pathanamthitta District, Kerala, India. The study sought to discern how the education level impacts these learners' decision-making abilities. Data was gathered from 200 samples, utilizing a Decision-Making Ability Scale and a general datasheet. Analysis of the collected data involved descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (correlation and percentage analysis). This study revealed a positive correlation between the level of education and decision-making ability among equivalency learners. The coefficient of correlation between Decision Making Ability and Education was computed as 0.71, signifying that as learners educational level increased, their decision-making abilities also improved. Education played a pivotal role in equipping learners with essential skills, knowledge, and cognitive abilities necessary for effective decision-making. Moreover, it broadened their perspectives, provided crucial information, and bolstered their self-confidence in decision-making processes. The findings of this study emphasize the significance of continuing and adult education in enhancing decision-making skills among equivalency learners who encounter distinctive challenges in their educational pursuits. By recognizing the positive impact of adult education on decision-making, this research underscores the importance of empowering learners through ongoing educational opportunities.*

Key Words: *Level of Education, Decision-Making Ability, Equivalency Learners, Equivalency Learning, Adult Education, Continuing Education*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Education is a fundamental pillar in the modern global economy, spanning from primary school to lifelong learning. It plays a crucial role in nurturing development, social progress, and human freedom by equipping individuals with knowledge and essential skills tailored to their needs. Aligned with the Millennium Report, Education for All (EFA) is positioned as a lifelong pursuit, supporting sustainable development. India has made significant strides in domains like early childhood care, primary education, gender equality, youth, adolescents, adult education, and education quality in pursuit of EFA. Recent years have seen notable advancements in India, marked by increased enrolment, retention, and regular attendance rates in primary education. The literacy rates have expanded to cover around three-fourths of the population, with some states achieving cent percent literacy, reflecting substantial investments in elementary education post-independence. Kerala emerges as a model for early literacy initiatives, with grassroots efforts like the "Travancore Grahndhasala Sangham" evolving into the "Kerala State Library Council." Initiatives such as the "Farmers Functional Literacy Programme" (FFLP) and the "Ernakulam District Total Literacy Campaign" played pivotal roles in Kerala's historic declaration as India's first fully literate state on April 18, 1991.

Despite commendable post-independence literacy initiatives, challenges persist, driven by poverty and unequal access, contributing to heightened illiteracy rates. Certain groups, including rural girls, ethnic minorities, orphans, students with disabilities, and rural residents, face marginalization, resulting in educational inequality. Studies by Pathak (2003), Bhat (1990), and Praveen Kumar Jha (2002) highlight the effectiveness of literacy campaigns, the historical presence of adult education in India, and the influence of self-confidence on decision-making styles.

Moreover, adult learning theories, elucidated by Knowles et al. (2015), find practical applications across diverse contexts. The Dual Process Theory posits two thinking modes – intuitive and analytical – with adult learners leveraging both in decision-making. The Expectancy-Value Theory emphasizes motivation shaped by expectations of success or failure and perceived outcome value.

In conclusion, education serves as a linchpin for global economic engagement, with India showcasing remarkable progress. While successes are evident, persistent challenges, including poverty and unequal access, necessitate continuous efforts for inclusive education. The array of studies and theories underscores the intricate nature of educational pursuits and their profound impact on societal development.

2. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority, an autonomous entity under the General Education Department of the Government of Kerala since 1998, oversees the implementation of the Continuing Education Programme (CEP). Originating from the National Literacy Mission, the CEP acts as a follow-up to Total Literacy and Post Literacy Programmes. Headquartered in Thiruvananthapuram, the authority, fully funded by the Kerala Government, manages literacy, continuing education, and lifelong learning programs. Launched on October 26, 1998, the CEP in Kerala emphasizes "Education for all and Education forever." The Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority collaborates with District Literacy Missions, while Continuing Education Centers, operating under Local Self Government Institutions, serve as service delivery units statewide. The current state-sponsored lifelong learning initiative concentrates on the Equivalency Programme, targeting the 4th, 7th, 10th, and 12th standard equivalency levels, aiming to achieve educational standards equivalent to pre-constructive levels in the public education system. The present study, titled "Education and Decision-Making Ability: A Study among Equivalency Learners in Pathanamthitta District," is significant for addressing the need for equivalency education, highlighting decision-making ability, offering policy implications, focusing on a context-specific study, and contributing to existing literature. Despite various studies on continuing education, equivalency learning, educational activities, and decision-making, a research gap exists specifically in the education and decision-making ability of equivalency learners in Pathanamthitta District, Kerala. This study seeks to fill this gap, providing valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge. Therefore, the study is titled "LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND DECISION-MAKING ABILITY OF EQUIVALENCY LEARNERS IN PATHANAMTHITTA DISTRICT."

3. OBJECTIVES:

- To analyze the decision-making ability of equivalency learners
- To find out the relationship between decision-making ability and education of equivalency learners

4. HYPOTHESES:

- There is a significant relationship between the decision-making ability and level of education of equivalency learners

5. METHODOLOGY IN BRIEF:

In this normative survey, the study explores the relationship between decision-making ability and education level among 200 equivalency learners in Pathanamthitta. Utilizing the Decision-Making Ability Scale and a general data sheet, the investigation employs a random sampling technique to ensure unbiased representation. Learners were briefed on confidentiality, and clear instructions were given during data collection. Statistical analysis involves Mean, Standard Deviation, and the Coefficient of Correlation, employing Percentage Analysis. The study aims to contribute insights into the interplay of education and decision-making abilities among equivalency learners in Pathanamthitta.

6. ANALYSIS OF THE LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF EQUIVALENCY LEARNERS:

The categorization of the total group was done based on their educational levels, indicating the percentage distribution of equivalency learners at the 4th, 7th, 10th, and 12th levels. The breakdown of the distribution is as follows: 10% at the 4th level, 12.5% at the 7th level, a notable portion of 22.5% at the 10th level, and the highest percentage, 55%, at the 12th level. This classification reveals that 10% and 12.5% of learners are found at the 4th and 7th levels, respectively. The most substantial portion, constituting 22.5%, is observed at the 10th level, while a considerable 55% are situated at the 12th level.

7. ANALYSIS OF DECISION-MAKING ABILITY OF EQUIVALENCY LEARNERS:

The analysis of the Decision-Making Ability data from the studied sample, measured through the Decision Making Ability Scale, involved the calculation of fundamental statistical measures—Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (σ). Descriptive statistics, specifically the Mean and Standard Deviation, were computed for the Decision Making Ability scores within the sample group. This analysis indicates that the Arithmetic Mean for the entire sample is 56.54,

with a Standard Deviation of 10.45. These values suggest that, on average, the Decision-Making Ability of equivalency learners surpasses the mean, with half of the learners achieving scores above 56.54.

8. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DECISION MAKING ABILITY AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF EQUIVALENCY LEARNERS FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE:

The analysis reveals a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.71$) between Decision-Making Ability and Education among equivalency learners in the Pathanamthitta district. With a t-value of 15.9587 and a significance level of $P < 0.01$ for the Total Sample ($N=200$), this correlation underscores a notable association. High decision-making ability is prevalent among learners with educational backgrounds at the 12th and 10th equivalency levels, constituting 68.28% and 25.28% of the total sample. Conversely, those with average ability are distributed at 6.78%, 10.46%, 19.72%, and 41.72% across the 4th, 7th, 10th, and 12th levels. Low decision-making ability is observed at 13.22% and 14.54% in the 4th and 7th levels. Notably, no learners at the 4th, 5th, and 7th levels fall into the high ability group, while those at the 12th and 10th levels exclusively comprise this group.

9. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

Equivalency education, designed for individuals of all ages, strives to impart literacy to those lacking it, irrespective of prior educational backgrounds. The study highlights the significant impact of education levels on the decision-making abilities of equivalency learners. To enhance decision-making skills and social empowerment, emphasis on higher levels of equivalency education is crucial. Notably, the research indicates a substantial improvement in Decision-Making Ability at the 10th and 12th equivalency levels. Equivalency education not only elevates decision-making but also nurtures lateral thinking, contributing to social empowerment. These findings underscore the pivotal role of education in empowerment. The analysis reveals an above-average Decision-Making Ability among equivalency learners, with 50% scoring above 56.54. The coefficient of correlation at 0.71 indicates a strong positive correlation between Decision Making Ability and Education Level among equivalency learners, significant at the 0.01 level, confirming the hypothesis.

10. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY:

This study underscores the need for personalized educational interventions to enhance decision-making skills among equivalency learners in Pathanamthitta. Educators and policymakers can use these findings for targeted programs, integrating decision-making skills into the curriculum. Recognizing the limitations of equivalency learners, the study calls for augmented support systems to cultivate decision-making abilities. The results emphasize extended educational planning for continuous skill development, urging stakeholders to design ongoing education and career development plans. Addressing ethical considerations in research is crucial, and collaborative efforts among institutions and learners are advocated. Overall, the study's implications can contribute to evidence-based interventions and policies for improved outcomes, achievements, and empowerment in the Pathanamthitta District.

11. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

Despite valuable contributions, this study acknowledges limitations impacting broader applicability. A small sample size may restrict generalization, and time/resource constraints limit thoroughness. Demographic factors within the sample, such as age and gender, may limit external validity. Self-reporting bias introduces potential inaccuracies. Despite these limitations, the research enriches knowledge on adult education and decision-making. It explores the relationship between education and decision-making abilities among equivalency learners, offering practical implications for policies and interventions in similar contexts.

12. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

The current study lays the groundwork for future research, suggesting several avenues for exploration:

- A more extensive study could involve a broader sample, encompassing additional equivalency learners and teachers, to yield more generalized outcomes.
- Exploring the attitudes of equivalency learners towards education presents an interesting area for investigation.
- Further studies could delve into various variables such as interest in learning, decision-making responsibility, and perspectives on equivalency education.
- Testing strategies for enhancing decision-making ability constitutes a valuable focus for future research.
- Replicating a similar study on mainstream school students, college students, and B.Ed trainees could provide comparative insights.

- Extending the study to include Anganwadi workers and employees in government, private, and banking sectors offers opportunities for diverse perspectives and findings.

13. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the study on "Level of Education and Decision-Making Ability of Equivalency Learners in Pathanamthitta District" establishes a significant positive correlation between the level of education and decision-making ability among equivalency learners. These findings emphasize the crucial role of accessible and quality education in empowering these learners to overcome unique challenges and enhance their decision-making skills. The study highlights the importance of providing education that enables equivalency learners to improve their decision-making abilities.

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