Scales of Daily Functioning: Development of
A Pilot Program and a Life Skills Pre- and Post-Assessment

Nicole Baggaley

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Abstract

Life skills are the skills that help an individual function on a daily basis, from cooking to social skills. Mental health professionals recognize that youth, especially at-risk youth, are lacking the social skills needed to thrive independently (Navickas, Gudaitis, & Kranjnakova, 2014). This is a growing concern as these youths will eventually become adults in society and will be raising children, seeking employment, and hopefully contributing to society in a positive way. Furthermore, it is being seen that schools are having difficulty engaging youth in programs which teach the skills necessary to survive independently (Sherraden & Grinstein-Weiss, 2015). As such, the purpose of this thesis was to create a pre- and post-test assessment for a pilot program being provided by Youth Diversion, Kingston, to determine the effectiveness of the program. The pilot program involved five different agencies within the city limits of Kingston. The program focused on five main domains: dietary health, community engagement, team building, financial literacy, and employability. The assessment is a five point Likert rating scale based on the five domains to assess the effectiveness of the pilot program. Statistical analysis suggested that the pilot program was not significant in increasing life skills for the six participants that completed the entire program. For future research, a larger sample size would be beneficial to provide a clearer picture of the impact of the program. However, despite statistical analysis proving that the pilot program was not statistically significant, visual analysis of the completed graphs showed that each participant had an increase in life skills after completing the post-test.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Overview:

Adolescence is a period in life that is defined by new experiences and emotions. Adolescents experience changes and shifts socially, emotionally, ethically, spiritually, physically, and cognitively (Scales, 2005 as cited in Carlisle 2011). Youth between the ages of 15-18 have multiple expectations placed upon them. Most have the expectations of attending school, gaining employment, and helping out at home. Youth are also faced with various decisions and new experiences such as alcohol and drugs (Carlisle, 2011). It is important, therefore, to teach them the skills they will need to be successful in everyday tasks.

The six-week program taught life-skills involving five main agencies within Kingston in collaboration with other community agencies. The program aimed to increase skills in the areas of financial literacy, employability, team building, community engagement, and diet/nutrition. These five pillars were chosen as topic areas based on the five agencies perspective that life-skills are difficult to teach without the help of professionals in the area. As such, funding was granted to collaborate with five other agencies in order to create a six-week program for 15 participants aged 15-18. The program aimed to increase each participant’s life-skills and confidence in their abilities in these five areas.

Key Terms:

Financial literacy is the ability to understand how money works in the world, such as how someone earns money and how they manage it. Community engagement is the process in which a community benefits organizations, individuals, and the ongoing relationship between all three. Team building can be defined as learning how to work collaboratively by building upon communication and trust with others. For the purpose of this assessment, dietary health can be defined as the knowledge and processes related to nutrition, such as the knowledge of diet and dietary guidelines. Lastly, employability can be defined as a set of skills, understanding, and personal attributes that make it more likely for individuals to gain employment.

Purpose:

This project focused on creating a pre- and post-measure assessment for the life-skills program. The assessment consists of a five-point Likert scale and five distinct sections. By creating a pre- and post-measure the program was assessed for effectiveness. Each of the five sections of the test focuses on one of the following: financial literacy, community engagement, team building, dietary health, and employability. Each of the five pillars were chosen based on their relevance and importance as discussed by all five agencies. For example, Peterson, Lowe, Aquilino, and Schneider (2005) studied randomly selected urban residents and compared them to rural residents to examined relationships between gender, participation, and a sense of community and they found that community engagement strongly predicted emotional empowerment. Additionally, Anderman and Leake (2007) argued that a sense of belonging is a universal human need, and for adolescents, school and home are the settings in which these connections can take place. The life-skills program aimed to increase adolescents’ skills in five separate domains. Therefore, it was hypothesized that life skills acquisition would increase with the implementation of the life skills program.

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Chapter II: Literature Review

Financial Literacy

The level of comprehension of key financial literacy is the amount in which one comprehends financial concepts and has the capability and confidence to manage personal finances through appropriate short-term and long-term goals (Remund, 2010). In Canada, the Financial Consumer Agency (2008) conducted a study on youth financial literacy and found that six out of ten youth have debt and 50% of these youth feel the debt they have is more than they can financially handle. Navickas, Gudaitis, and Krajnakova (2014) stated that it is imperative to have adequate financial management, knowledge, and skills starting at a young age. They also found that one of the best ways to increase these skills was through the creation and use of a financial budget. Bryant (2010) believed that financial literacy is significant because financial stability has an impact on every phase of our lives. He also made a crucial point in saying that we need to encourage smart financial decision making not only for those who have ample amount of funds, but in particular we need to empower those who are from impoverished families. Angulo-Ruiz and Pergelova (2015) found that parents’ financial behaviour had a direct impact on students’ financial behaviour. As such, it is important to target youth with minimal family connection as they will have limited to no role models for financial planning.

Sherraden and Grinstein-Weiss (2015) analyzed responses to a financial survey and found three main trends; people are often unprepared to use the quickly expanding array of available financial services, young people are being presented with crucial financial decisions earlier in life compared to the generation before them, and critical financial decisions can have severe impacts on education, careers, and financial well-being over the life span. The amount of financial challenges presented in young adults’ lives make clear the need for greater financial readiness and opportunity (Sherraden & Grinstein-Weiss, 2015). It is important to have good personal finance skills in order to make well informed daily decisions to help save money, these decisions can improve long term financial stability, and proves the need for financial literacy education programs at a young age.

Employability

Employability refers to an individual’s set of accomplishments, understanding, and personal characteristics that make it more likely to gain employment and to be successful in their preferred occupations. Ferguson (2012) stated that clients who participate in job skills training report improvements in relationships, self-esteem, and life satisfaction, in addition to gaining employment. Ferguson (2012) completed a study using 28 participants, 16 participants were in the intervention group which combined mental health services with vocational training. The control group consisted of 12 participants who received services from the agency in regular form, meaning that they received mental health and vocational services separately. The social enterprise model was the intervention; the participants in this group were assigned a mentor to help them through the rest of the intervention phases which involved vocational skills acquisition, small business skill attainment, and positive business formation and distribution (Ferguson, 2012). Additionally, throughout the three job training phases, youth were also accessing clinical services twice a week for their mental health. Qualitative findings from the study suggested that the intervention influenced participants’ self-esteem, motivation, employability, relationships with peers and family, and pro-social behaviour. Thus, the findings of this study support the integration of vocational and clinical services for youth.
Morgan, Leatzow, Clark, and Siller (2014) completed a pilot study to evaluate the effectiveness of a previously existing interview skills curriculum, which was a 12-week group-delivered manualized intervention for young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The purpose of their study was to increase social skills essential for a successful job interview for adults diagnosed with ASD. Morgan et al., (2014) had 28 adult participants that were randomly assigned to the intervention or a control group. Each participant was asked to complete three assessments for baseline and follow up. The three assessments consisted of a mock interview, an assessment regarding gross and fine motor skills, and a patient health questionnaire (Morgan et al., 2014). Through the analysis of these assessments it was shown that the experimental group demonstrated larger gains in social skills observed in mock job interviews than the control group (Morgan et al., 2014). These results show that a brief, low-intensity treatment can advance job-interview performance for young adults with ASD.

Bushell, Austin, Moore, Hendry, and Adams (2015) conducted a study to see whether an assessment for learning was an effective method for increasing student’s chances of gaining employment as a pharmacist intern. The participants consisted of nine students who were involved in two mock interviews; before the interviews, students received training in writing a cover letter/resume and how to respond to specific interview questions (Bushell et al., 2015). After each interview, students received feedback about their behaviour and responses. Participants were asked to complete a pre- and post-test assessment to evaluate whether the training and mock interviews helped. The results showed that 89% of students found the training and mock interviews helped them to identify weaknesses which, in turn, helped them develop to be prepared for actual interviews (Bushell et al., 2015).

Furthermore, Austin and Grant (1981) completed a study of 60 participants considered disadvantaged in the job market. The definition of disadvantaged used in the article consisted of first-generation college students who lacked communication skills and who were viewed as culturally disadvantaged and socially unsophisticated. Participants were randomly assigned to one of six treatment conditions (Austin & Grant, 1981). The five treatment conditions were as follows: didactic; didactic plus a mock interview; didactic plus professional videotape; didactic plus self-videotape with no feedback; and didactic plus self-videotape with feedback. Austin and Grant (1981) described didactic treatment through three sessions. Session one consisted of teaching about the purpose of an interview, different types of interviews, and the importance of being able to sell oneself and their skills. Session two involved a description of the different stages of an interview, the importance of nonverbal communication, the effect of communication and interpersonal skills, and the development of positive job-related information. Session three included resume evaluation and practice for interviews. Each participant was asked to complete pre- and post-test measurements (Austin & Grant, 1981). Analysis of these measurements confirmed a significant difference in interview performance, self-evaluation, and assertiveness for the five experimental groups (Austin & Grant, 1981). It is also noted that all five treatment groups performed significantly greater than the control group, however, there was no significance between the five experimental groups (Austin & Grant, 1981). These results indicate that an effective training program with practice sessions for clients will make a difference in employability skills.
Community Engagement

Community engagement refers to an individual’s involvement and commitment to the improvement of a specific community (Yeh et al., 2015). It is imperative to note that youth disengagement is linked with negative outcomes such as delinquency, school absence, relationship issues, and mental health concerns (Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Montague, 2006). Flanagan (2012) did an extensive review of the literature regarding youths’ involvement in the community and made some key findings; young people’s well-being is improved when they feel like respected members of society, community service can challenge stereotypes and increase understanding, and community service also increases teen’s knowledge about the people and services in their community in which they have access too. Yeh et al., (2014), also supported these findings with their review of the literature that found high school students who participated in community service were significantly more likely to graduate college; being engaged in local communities provides a source of motivation for students because they believe their accomplishments are a reflection of their family and social system. America’s Promise Alliance (2014) completed a report that revealed youth drop out of school for multiple reasons such as lack of parenting, violence in the home, negative peer influences, and a sense of responsibility for others. Thus, through community engagement, if some of these factors were eliminated or mitigated through an engaged community it could help promote student attendance in academics. However, youth who come from families that move around a lot or do not have a sense of home are impacted in their ability to engage in their community (Rowe & Savelsberg, 2010). They also concluded that youth involvement in their community during high school can have a distinct and important positive effect on their identity and can affect their post-school transitions. As a result, it is important to introduce youth to community engagement, not only to help them understand the resources that are available, but also to help them develop their sense of belonging.

Team Building

Team building can be defined as connecting an individual with a group or an organization (DeVany, 1999). DeVany (1999) also recognized that, through team-building, individuals can receive a sense of contribution and a climate of mutual respect. Carlisle (2011) created a study with the sole purpose being to inspire middle school students to establish healthy relationships with both peers and teachers. The researcher recognized that the main problem was that many middle school students were not able to exhibit the positive attributes needed to engage in healthy relationships. The intervention created by Carlisle (2011) took place in a middle school population with approximately 450 students. Carlisle (2011) picked a group of approximately 60 students and implemented an intervention which consisted of a solution strategy. The solution strategy began with classroom activities to build healthy relationships. These activities consisted of introductory interviews of each of the students, writing a descriptive paragraph on a meaningful object that represented the student’s personality, and a team-building field trip to a local amusement park. Students in the experimental group also contributed to team-building activities, implemented community service learning projects throughout the school, participated in a mentoring program about healthy relationships and conflict resolution throughout the school, and were required to reflect on their involvement by journal writing (Carlisle, 2011). The results of this study show that the combination of numerous team-building strategies helped to develop an increase in students establishing and recognizing the need for positive attributes to build healthy relationships with their peers and teachers. It is important to note that adolescents socio-
emotional health and motivation is highly influenced by their peers, as well as, a positive sense of belonging is associated with positive peer relationships (Carlisle, 2011).

Another study completed by Rovio, Arvinen-Barrow, Weigand, Eskola, and Lintunen (2012), evaluated the implementation of a 12-month, multifaceted team-building program for 22 participants who were 15-16 years old. The researchers used multiple aspects of team building, such as setting individual and team goals and role identification. The results of this study showed that the team reached all of the goals that were set and there was an increase in group functioning and performance after the team building intervention. Furthermore, in a follow-up it was seen that the team was still working effectively and were practicing the team building activities they were taught after the intervention was complete (Rovio et al., 2012).

Finally, the last study reviewed evaluated the impact of a one-day retreat focused on leadership and team building (Stoller, Rose, Lee, Dolgan, & Hoogwerf, 2004). Activities involved at the retreat were challenging tasks that required skills like how to make decisions as a team and identifying qualities of a good leader. There were 32 participants who completed baseline and follow-up questionnaires to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Follow-up responses specified noteworthy increases in attendee’s agreement that good leaders; challenge ideas, make decisions based on the groups shared visions, allow others to participate, and serve as good role models (Stoller et al., 2004). Overall, participants reported that the one-day retreat was effective in helping them to develop teamwork and leadership skills.

As team building progresses, trust begins to replace fear and participants can improve their decision-making processes (DeVany, 1999). Throughout life there are multiple situations in which an individual must be able to co-operate as a team member, as a result, team building is an important characteristic that youth should be able to engage in.

**Dietary Health**

There is a decline in the teaching of basic cooking skills at home; cooking classes in schools are no longer strictly taught in most countries (Hartmann, Dohle, & Siegrist, 2013). Kerr et al., (2016) noted that early adulthood implies a shift to independent living, which is a period when there are changes in body shape and weight, thus presenting an ideal time for health interventions to lessen the effect of health problems and risk factors for chronic diseases later in life. Having sufficient nutrition skills, or having the ability to plan, select, prepare, and consume food has been proposed as a protective factor against obesity and nutrition related chronic disease (Slater & Mudryj, 2016). Caraher, Seeley, Wu, and Lloyd (2012) reviewed the impact of a school teaching program on food, health, nutrition, and cooking taught by a chef. Four matched schools were used and the target groups were 9-11 years old (Caraher et al., 2012). The main data collection method consisted of a pre- and post-questionnaire delivered two weeks before the program and two weeks after the program was completed. The intervention consisted of three sessions where the chef would attend the school and teach nutritional lessons and cooking skills to the students. Caraher et al., (2012) noted in their results that there was a gain in skills for both confidences in preparing food and for purchasing ingredients. As well, children’s average reported vegetable consumption increased after having a session with the chef. As a result, it can be concluded that having a professional in the nutritional field teach kids the importance of quality food and the ability to prepare such ingredients is important to aid youth in feeling competent about controlling their diet needs.
Another study completed by Kerr et al., (2016) examined the use of technology to improve 247 youth’s dietary intake of fruit and vegetables and to decrease intake of sugary food over a six-month period. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups: dietary feedback and weekly text messages; dietary feedback only; or control group. Dietary intake was assessed using a mobile app where participants were required to take photos of the food and beverages they consumed (Kerr et al., 2016). For those in the weekly text message group, they received texts that contained motivational and informative messages regarding nutrition (Kerr et al., 2016). The researchers study displayed that all groups had a decrease in body weight, however, only male youth had a decrease in sugary food while female youth primarily had an increase in fruit and vegetables. As technology becomes more advanced and common in society, interventions should focus on using technology as an advantage. This study provides important information regarding how to provide youth with access to nutrition.

Utter, Denny, Lucassen, and Dyson (2015), conducted a study that involved 8500 students completing a health and well-being survey. The objective of this study was to establish the relationships between cooking and specific indicators of diet quality, mental well-being, and family relationships. Multiple regression analysis was completed to study the relationships between cooking ability/frequency and indicators of health and well-being (Utter et al., 2015). The analysis showed numerous results, such as that 80% of young people reported being able to cook a meal with basic ingredients, however, 15% reported that they could not cook a meal without help, and 5% reported that they could not cook at all (Utter et al., 2015). The researchers also found that young people living in impoverished homes were more likely to report no cooking ability. Nonetheless, Utter et al. (2015) reported that cooking ability was associated with better indicators of dietary quality, better family relationships, and mental well-being. Thus, it is evident that although a large quantity of youth self-reported that they have some cooking ability, it is still a difficult area for a significant amount of youth to feel confident in, especially those who come from an impoverished home.

Slater and Mudryj (2016) completed a review of the data from the Canadian Community Health Survey (2013) to identify and describe Canadians’ self-perceived eating habits and food skills. Slater and Mudryj (2016) discovered multiple facts regarding youth and their nutritional diets including that almost two-thirds of respondents could prepare most dishes, although those 12-29 years old were less likely to cook. As well, they noted that those with less than post-secondary education had significantly lower cooking skills compared to those who had more than post-secondary education. In addition, Slater and Mudryj (2016), noted that younger Canadians were more likely to use convenience foods, which may be related to the fact that they have fewer food skills; a smaller percentage of younger Canadians reported being capable of making complex dishes. This is consistent with the reports that Canadian youth have fewer food skills because of lack of in-home learning and fewer formal educational opportunities to learn about food and nutrition (Slater & Mudryj, 2016). As such, it is important that we as a society begin to increase youth’s knowledge regarding nutrition to prevent future health issues in their lives.

Summary

The five pillars chosen for the life skills assessment covered a broad range of skills that youth need to be able to successfully function on a daily basis. It has been confirmed that the research supports the importance of these five skills for youth to obtain. Nevertheless, it is
imperative that creating a program for youth which combines all five pillars will be assessed for effectiveness. The created life-skills program took place over a six-week period and was predicted to involve 15 participants. Each pillar will be discussed twice over the six-week span. It is important to note that the program will be taught by five different agencies, so that each topic is presented by an expert in the field. Incorporating the components of the five pillars in the assessment is crucial for identification of the effectiveness of the program. As such, effectiveness will be assessed through the clients completing the created pre- and post-test assessments. After the assessments are completed they will be statistically analyzed to provide information on the usefulness of the newly created life-skills program.

Chapter III: Method

Intended Use

The purpose of the study was to create a pre- and post-measure for a newly created six-week program that would increase life-skills in youth. The Research Ethics Board of St. Lawrence college approved this thesis on October 27th 2016. The created assessment consists of 30 questions in the form of yes-or-no questions and Likert-rating scales. The assessment is broken into five categories of life skills that are being taught in the six-week program. The five categories include team building, community engagement, nutrition and dietary health, financial literacy, and employability. The assessment was created to evaluate the effectiveness of the life skills program. The purpose of the pre- and post-assessment measures was to provide outcome data that would provide support for the theory that the life skills program was effective in teaching life-skills. It is important to note that the created assessment will be used each time the program is run to provide outcome measures.

Participants

The program was recommended for youth aged 15-18. The inclusion criteria consisted of youth who were involved with an agency specifically for youth in Kingston that demonstrated a need for life-skills, such as being referred for independent living. The only reason participants were excluded was if their chorological age was more than five years out of the aforementioned age range. However, an exception was made if the referring agency could prove that the participant’s mental capacity fell within the 15-18 age range. Youth were referred to the program coordinators by different agencies throughout Kingston. Once youth were referred to the program coordinators, they were contacted by telephone. Informed consent was provided in the intake assessment for each participant, after the form was thoroughly explained and signed, both the program and the participant received a copy (Appendix A). The participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the program at any time and it would not affect any current or future services they receive from Youth Diversion. In total, there were six participants, one female and five males aged 15-18. It should be noted that there is one client that was referred for the program who was 24, but because his developmental level is within the age range of 15-16, he was included in the program and study. As well, it should be mentioned that enrollment in the program was lower than predicted as there was a limited amount of time to engage participants in the program. Each participant completed the pre-assessment on the first day of the program, and the post-measure was completed on the last day of the program.
The two program coordinators were present every evening the program runs. As well, there were seven volunteers for the program who act as mentors that were present for the evenings that the life-skills program occurs. The program was presented different depending on what was being presented. Every topic was run by the professionals in that field, as such, each week had a different agenda and plan. However, each week was extremely engaging and combined a lot of group discussions to continue engagement throughout the session.

**Research Design**

The project utilizes a pre- and post-test design to determine the effectiveness of the life-skills program. The participants were all required to complete the pre- and post-test using the *Life Skills Assessment* that was developed by the student researcher (Appendix B). Participants were required to attend every evening of the program, which is three hours a night, two nights a week for six weeks, in order to remain in the program. Every subject was assigned a participation code to ensure they would not be identified by their name when they completed the assessments. The statistics that were utilized in this project consisted of descriptive statistics, reliability, and validity. The descriptive statistics consisted of mean, median, and mode, as well as significance. The statistics completed through the analysis of the pre- and post-measures will either prove or disprove the effectiveness of the life-skills program. The agency will be using the analyzed data from the outcome measures to present the funding organizations of the life-skills pilot program that it was effective in teaching the required outcomes. It should be noted that as the assessment was created by the student there is no available validity and reliability measure for the outcome measure.

**Operational Definitions**

**Independent variable.** The life skills program was six-weeks long and consisted of five specific pillars of teaching: community engagement; financial literacy; team building; dietary health; and employability. Life skills can be defined as a skill that is necessary or desirable to be able to fully participate in everyday life.

**Dependent variable.** For the purpose of this study, daily functioning can be defined by routine activities that people tend to do every day without needing assistance, such as cooking. Daily functioning was measured using the Life Skills Assessment created by the student researcher.

**Assessment Key Terms**

**Community engagement.** The way in which an individual builds a continuous and enduring relationship with a community organization to benefit the public.

**Financial literacy.** The ability to understand how money works in the world, such as, how someone earns money and how they can manage it.

**Team building.** The ability to work collaboratively, rather than by oneself, by building upon communication and trust with others.

**Dietary health.** The knowledge and process related to nutrition, including the knowledge of diet, disease, and dietary guidelines. However, it also includes the ability to cook basic ingredient meals.
Employability. An individual’s personal aspects which make them more likely to gain employment such as their achievements and characteristics.

Settings and Materials

The Youth Diversion office for SNAP was utilized to complete the assessments for each participant. The participants were asked to sit in the office and complete the assessments and then return to the classroom when they were finished. The participants were asked to complete these assessments one at a time in order to provide them with privacy and silence to fill out the assessment. The clients read over the assessment alone and completed it by themselves. However, the participants had access to the program coordinators if they had any questions while filling out the life-skills assessment.

The student facilitator prepared 15 packages for the participants in anticipation for the initial intake assessment, however, only six were required. Each package had two copies of the consent form and both pre- and post-test assessments. The participants were provided with a writing utensil to complete the assessment.

Chapter IV: Results

The program was delivered from November 1st, 2016 – December 8th, 2016 with six participants. The program ran two nights a week for three hours each night. Original assessments were provided to the on-site supervisor on December 9th, 2016 to be securely stored at Youth Diversion.

The Life Skills Program

Six participants attended the program on the first evening and completed the Life Skills Assessment (Baggaley, 2016). The participants completed pre-test assessment data was recorded in Excel before using the computer program SPSS to analyze the descriptive statistics. The post-test assessment was completed on the last evening of the program and the same occurred with the data. The pre- and post-test assessments required the participants to rate 30 questions on a 5-point Likert scale. Within the assessment there were five distinct categories that were to be addressed in the Life Skills Program. After the assessments were both completed, the participant’s responses were categorized into numerical form for the purpose of completing the statistical analysis of the data. Each possible answer was given a value, with strongly agree, very comfortable, and very knowledgeable scored with a 5. Whereas, strongly disagree, very uncomfortable, and no knowledge was given a 1. As such, it should be noted that the higher the total score the more the participant felt they knew. The total sums of scores were computed to compare the means in a paired t-test to determine if the program was significant.

The pre-test assessment included 30 questions within five main domains; financial literacy, nutrition/diet, employability, community engagement, and team building. The pre-test descriptive statistics results are listed in Figure 1.
**Pre-Test Descriptive Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.806</td>
<td>1.975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.516</td>
<td>1.265</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.494</td>
<td>1.211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>.477</td>
<td>1.169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How comfortable are you walking into a bank?</td>
<td>The world is going digital, do you think this will affect the way you do banking?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>.703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important do you think it is to save money?</td>
<td>How important do you think it is to lead a healthy lifestyle?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important is it to be responsible for your banking information?</td>
<td>Do you cook at home on a regular basis?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How helpful would a budget be to help you now and in your future?</td>
<td>Do you feel comfortable planning a healthy meal?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>.601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The world is going digital, do you think this will affect the way you do banking?</td>
<td>Do you feel comfortable navigating the grocery store to identify and select healthy and affordable foods?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important do you think it is to lead a healthy lifestyle?</td>
<td>Do you feel comfortable comparing different food products by reading nutrition facts and comparing unit prices?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
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Do you think it is important to be involved in your community?  
Do you think it is important to give back to your community?  
Do you know which agencies in Kingston provide help specifically to youth?  
If you found yourself homeless, do you know where you could go?  
If you are having difficulties with your mental health, do you know which agencies could help you?  
How comfortable are you with problem solving?  
Do you think you are able to follow instruction and listen effectively?  
Do you think being able to work with others is an important skill?  
How comfortable are you working with a team?  
Do you think you have the skills to be a good leader?  

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<td>Upon completion of the Life Skills workshop, the participants were asked to again complete the Life Skills Assessment (Baggaley, 2016). The results were analyzed in the same format as the pre-test assessment. The post-test results can be found below in Figure 2.</td>
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## Post-Test Descriptive Statistics

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<td>Do you feel comfortable comparing different food products by reading nutrition facts and comparing unit prices?</td>
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**Figure 2.** Post-test Descriptive Statistics.

Compared to the pre-test, the post-test results show that the participant’s understanding, knowledge, and level of comfort was increased in multiple aspects of the five main domains. The total sums of each participant’s scores for both tests are represented in a visual bar graph below.
Every participant had an increased overall score from the pre-test to the post-test. The bar graph shows that although for sum the increase was dramatic, the pilot program only had minimal effect in increasing the scores for other participants. However, three of the cases did have a 1-point increase exceeding 25 points each overall.

The data from the pre- and post-test assessments were analyzed in SPSS using a paired sample T-test to determine if the pilot program created statistically significant results. This information can be found below in figure four.
Paired Samples T-Test

Paired Samples Statistics

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Paired Samples Correlations

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Paired Samples Test

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<th>df</th>
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<td>PreTest - PostTest</td>
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*Figure 4. Paired Samples T-test Analysis.*
The t-test analysis determined that significance was equal to Sig=.024, indicating that the workshop did not create a significant change because the scores are way beyond 0.05, therefore we accept the variances are equal and accept the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis simply states that in the general population there is no change or difference in the relationships (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013). By accepting the null hypothesis, the alternative hypothesis is rejected, which is simply that the pilot program will make a difference in life skills for the participants. There are two types of errors that can occur when testing a hypothesis: a type I and a type II error. Since this specific test failed to reject the null hypothesis it is only possible to have a type II error occur. A type II error means that a treatment effect really exists, but the hypothesis test fails to detect it (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013). This type of error can occur when the sample mean is not in the critical region even though it can be seen to have had an effect on the sample (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013). Often, this can happen when the effect is relatively small.

Chapter V: Discussion

Summary

Although the results of the statistical analysis determined that the life skills did not create statistically significant changes in the participant’s life skills development, it can still be considered an important study to the field of behavioural psychology. This information series aimed to support a need in youth skills development by creating a pilot program to address deficits in skills and increase connections among the community. The benefit of this research to the field of behavioural psychology is three-fold.

Firstly, the study addressed a population that is at risk for skills that are found to be diminishing over generations (Sherraden & Grinstein-Weiss, 2015). This at-risk population of youth can be overlooked from research as they are considered uniquely vulnerable to society. At-risk youth may lack the socioeconomic stability and will rely on agencies to support them emotionally, financially, and physically. As such, it can be difficult to develop programs for these clients as they will need transportation, an easily accessible location, and a specific timeframe. Thankfully, the agencies involved in this pilot program were able to provide support for all of the above concerns and were able to provide refreshments and dinner as well as any supplies needed for the weekly programming.

Secondly, the pilot program combined the expertise from five different Kingston agencies. The advantage of this is that every client learns about the help that is available to them from multiple agencies and helps them to develop connections. In addition, each program was organized at the location of the agency who was in control of that week, meaning that the clients were able to discover the location of the buildings and how to get there. Using multiple agencies ensures that each focused domain is being taught by an expert in the field. Working with five different agencies allowed for lots of feedback about changes that could be made to increase the effectiveness of the program in the future.

Lastly, although the results were not statistically significant, it can be seen that every student had an improvement in skills from their pre- and post-test assessments. Furthermore, the feedback received from clients and volunteers regarding the program was very positive. The six
participants completed the life skills program and were actively engaged in most, if not all weekly activities. Each participant expressed their satisfaction about the program and how it helped them develop and create new connections among the community. Most participants indicated that if there were sections that they were already confident in they still learned information during those sessions that would help them in their future endeavors. Thus, despite having a small sample size, the feedback from the clients and volunteers involved suggests that the pilot program did have a positive effect on each of the clients.

**Multilevel Benefits of the Life Skills Pilot Program**

The pilot program demonstrated that, with future grant money, this program could be developed in a similar way to provide life skills training for youth. The current program could address the feedback given by the volunteers and involved agencies to develop a life skills program that could become a full time program ran by Youth Diversion. The created assessment can be continually used to address the main skills of the program and to generate outcome data.

The pilot program demonstrated that it was capable of increasing the life skills in six youth participants. Thus, it is imperative that this program be critiqued and developed further based on feedback to help more clients in the future. It is important to note that the involvement of multiple city agencies was beneficial as it allowed agencies to work collaboratively, but also for the youth, as they developed connections that could help them in the future. Each agency developed the youth’s skills and provided them with access to programs after the life skills program was completed if they so wanted.

On a societal level, this pilot program provided youth with a safe place two nights a week to have non contingent access to professionals. As well, it allowed youth to develop positive peer relationships. It helped to develop necessary life skills that will help youth in the future to survive independently, but also provided them with the information needed if necessary to access future programming among Kingston’s various programs.

**Ethical Concerns**

This author recognizes the ethical concerns that may arise when working with youth. The agency and the staff had to make sure that the youth did not feel obligated to participate in the program to receive future support from the involved agencies. To ensure the clients did not feel pressured to participate, they were provided with several prompts through the programming reminding them that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time. As well, if the clients were uncomfortable with any of the activities that occurred during the programming they were encouraged to refrain from participating and were offered further support if necessary. Most of the clients had a previous relationship with at least one of the staff members which allowed for more positive rapport building to occur, but also helped clients feel comfortable during the program. To provide support to the clients emotionally during the programming, the staff and volunteers engaged in any activities that the youth were expected to participate in. The participation of the volunteers and staff members showed positive regard and ensured that the participants did not feel signaled out or alone during the programming.

**Strengths and Limitations**

The life skills pilot program had many strengths. All six participants increased their life skills development based on the results displayed above. Although the changes were not
statistically significant, the participants verbally expressed that they found the program to be enjoyable and helpful. Another strength of the program is that the provided funding incorporated transportation for all clients so it was easy to get clients to and from programming, but also to get the group to the different agencies among the city. Another strength that should be noted is that each domain that was chosen to be focused on was taught by an expert in that field to ensure that the youth were getting the best skill teaching that could be provided, rather than simply being taught by one agency. Finally, although the time frame was only six weeks, that could be seen as a strength as the youth were only asked to commit to a program for a short amount of time, which makes participation more likely.

Unfortunately, because only six participants were able to participate in the pre- and post-test assessment, it limited the sample size of the study. A major limitation of the present study was the because of the small sample size it was extremely unlikely to produce results that would be statistically significant. However, it should be noted that because of staffing and funding the program was only able to accommodate fifteen participants, but because of dropout rates the final tally was only six participants. Another limitation of the study included the limited timeframe to complete the workshop and the ability to staff the program. The program relied heavily on volunteers to ensure that the evenings ran smoothly. However, because the time frame was from three to six, two evenings a week, it can be difficult to find volunteers who have free time during that part of the day and can make a commitment for six weeks.

Future Research

Future research should attempt to complete a similar workshop with a larger sample size to determine if it can successfully increase the development of life skills in a statistically significant way. Future research should also include stricter exclusion criteria, such as clients who cannot make a commitment for the full six weeks, and exclude youth who have already completed any form of life skills programming. Lastly, future research should complete follow-up data to determine if the program remains effective over time and that the skills are still being utilized.

Conclusion

According to the visual analysis of the bar graph, each participant of the pilot program did increase their life skills. Despite the fact that it did not reach the level of statistical significance, the post-test demonstrated that clients were feeling more knowledgeable and more comfortable in the five domains. In addition, each client walked away from the program with a constructed resume in which they felt confident, as shown by the completed post-assessments. The improvement in the participant’s life skills met the original goal set out by the agencies involved in the creation of the pilot program. Overall, this pilot program was important to the agency and the field of behavioural psychology as it provides a multiagency approach to working collaboratively to provide the best life skills through group learning. As well, the development of a pre- and post-test measure effectively assessed and determined that the pilot program was effective for the six participants.

Word Count: 6984
References

America’s Promise Alliance (2014). Don’t call them dropouts: understanding the experience of young people who leave high school before graduation. Washington, DC: Center for Promise at Tufts University.


Appendix A: Informed Consent for Youth

**Project title:** Scales of Life Skills: Development of Pre- and Post-Assessments of Life Skills for Youth

**Principal Investigator:** Nicole Baggaley

**Agency Supervisor:** Nancy Bondy

**College Supervisor:** Erin McCormick

**Name of Institution:** St. Lawrence College

**Name of Partnering Agency:** Youth Diversion

**Invitation:**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. I am a student in my 4th year of the Behavioural Psychology program at St. Lawrence College. I am currently on placement at Youth Diversion. As part of this placement, I am completing a research project. I would like to ask for your assistance to complete this project. The information in this form will help you understand my project. Please read the information carefully and ask all the questions you might have before you decide if you want to take part.

**Why is this study being done?**

This study is being done to create an assessment that will discover if the life skills program at Youth Diversion is helpful in increasing life skills in five specific aspects in youth aged 15-18.

**What will you need to do if you take part?**

At this time, you have already agreed to partake in the six-week life skills program designed by Youth Diversion and sister agencies. By agreeing to partake in this life skills program you were advised there would be an assessment that would be completed before and after you complete the program. This assessment will consist of five topics of life skills that you will be taught about during the program. The assessment being created will take no longer than thirty minutes and it is a part of the programs intake meeting, as well the last meeting of the program. The results from this questionnaire will help us to understand whether or not the life skills program was effective in teaching you life skills in the five targeted areas. This sort of information can help improve the program in the future.

**What are the potential benefits of this research study to others?**

Participation in this assessment will not directly benefit you. However, the results gathered through this assessment will guide future development of the life skills program. As well, it is your right to ask to see the results of the assessments to see how different your answers were on the pre- and post-assessment to understand whether or not the program helped you develop in the specified areas.

**What are the potential disadvantages or risks of taking part? What happens if something goes wrong?**
Risks from taking part in this research study are minimal but may include frustration, boredom, or fatigue from answering questions, or sometimes the questions might make an individual feel sad or upset. If you have a strong reaction to the questions, they are encouraged to talk to me (the student researcher) or the program coordinator. As well, there are minimal risks with the overall life skills program but if a client is feeling anxious or stressed at any time they are encouraged to talk to their assigned mentor or a professional who is delivering the session that evening.

Will my child’s information collected in this project be kept private?

A main priority within Youth Diversion is confidentiality. All information gained through this assessment will be kept strictly confidential, your child will not ever be identified by it. All information, including consent and completed assessments, must be kept in a locked cabinet, which is kept in a locked room. Youth Diversion keeps all client information for 15 years after the client’s intake assessment. After the fifteen years, the confidential information is shredded and disposed of. Publications, presentations, and reports will not include the identity of any participants.

Do you have to take part?

Taking part in the life skills program is strictly voluntary. It is up to you to decide if you will take part. Your decision will not impact any other service you receive in the future from Youth Diversion. However, if you agree to partake in the life skills program, you are agreeing to partake in this assessment as it is a mandatory part of the program. If you do agree to join the life skills program, you are still free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

Contact Information

This research project has received ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee for Behavioural Psychology (REC-P) under the authority of the St. Lawrence College Research Ethics Board (SLC-REB). The project was developed under the supervision of Nancy Bondy, my supervisor from Youth Diversion. I appreciate your cooperation and if you have any additional questions, feel free to ask me, nbaggaley11@student.sl.on.ca. You can also contact my College Supervisor erin.mccormick@csc-scc.gc.ca. If you have any concerns about the way this research is being conducted or about your rights as a participant, you may contact the SLC-REB Chair at reb@sl.on.ca.
Appendix B: Life-Skills Assessment Pre-Measure

Life Skills Pre-Assessment

Overview:
This assessment consists of 30 questions that will be answered using a Likert rating scale of 1 - 5. The assessment should be completed using a pencil or pen. The assessment should take no longer than thirty minutes to complete. The assessment will be completed twice, once before the program begins and once immediately after the program finishes. The assessment will be used to examine the effectiveness of the life skills program in teaching skills in the five chosen domains.

Terms:

Financial Literacy - Financial literacy can be defined as the ability to understand how money works in the world, such as, how someone earns money and how they can manage it.

Dietary Health – For the purpose of this assessment, dietary health can be defined as the knowledge and processes related to nutrition, including the knowledge of diet, disease, and dietary guidelines. However, it also includes the ability to cook basic ingredient meals.

Employability – For the purpose of this assessment, employability skills can be defined as a set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment.

Community Engagement – Community engagement refers to the process by which community organizations and individuals build ongoing, permanent relationships for the benefit of a community.

Team Building – Team building can be defined as learning how to work collaboratively, rather than alone. It builds upon communication and trust with others.
Student Name:  
Date:  

Financial Literacy:  
1. How comfortable are you walking into a bank?  
   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
   1 2 3 4 5  
   Not Comfortable     Very Comfortable  

2. Do you know what credit is?  
   ☐ ☐  
   Yes   No  
   If yes, continue to question 3. If no, continue to question 4.  

3. How important do you think it is to have good credit?  
   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
   1 2 3 4 5  
   Not Important     Very Important  

4. How important do you think it is to save money?  
   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
   1 2 3 4 5  
   Not Important     Very Important  

5. How important is it to be responsible for your banking information?  
   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
   1 2 3 4 5  
   Not Important     Very Important  

6. How helpful would a budget be to help you now and in your future?  
   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
   1 2 3 4 5  
   Not Helpful     Very Helpful  

7. The world is going ‘digital’; do you think that this will affect the way you do banking?  
   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
   1 2 3 4 5  
   No Affect     Significant Affect  

Nutrition/Diet:  
8. How important do you think it is to lead a healthy lifestyle?  
   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
   1 2 3 4 5  
   Not Important     Very Important  

9. Do you know what a healthy meal is?  
   ☐ ☐  
   Yes   No  

10. Do you cook at home on a regular basis?  
    ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
    1 2 3 4 5  
    Never     Frequently
11. Do you feel comfortable planning a healthy meal?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

Very Uncomfortable Very Comfortable

12. Do you feel comfortable navigating the grocery store to identify and select healthy and affordable foods?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

Very Uncomfortable Very Comfortable

13. Do you feel comfortable comparing different food products by reading nutrition facts and comparing unit prices?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

Very Uncomfortable Very Comfortable

Employability:

14. Do you have a resume?

[ ] [ ]

Yes No

If yes, continue to question 15. If no, continue to question 16.

15. How happy are you with your resume?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

Not happy Very happy

16. How confident are you in your ability to talk to a potential employer?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

Not confident Very confident

17. How confident are you with online applications?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

Not confident Very confident

18. How prepared do you feel for an interview?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

Not prepared Very prepared

19. Do you feel you have appropriate interview clothing?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

No appropriate clothing Very appropriate clothing

Community Engagement:

20. Have you been involved in your community (i.e. volunteering)?

[ ] [ ]

Yes No
21. Do you think it is important to be involved in your community?

- [ ] 1 2 3 4 5

No Importance

22. Do you think it is important to give back to your community?

- [ ] 1 2 3 4 5

No Importance

23. Do you know which agencies in Kingston provide help specifically to youth?

- [ ] 1 2 3 4 5

Limited Knowledge

24. If you found yourself homeless, do you know where you could go?

- [ ] 1 2 3 4 5

Limited Knowledge

25. If you were having difficulties with your mental health, do you know which agencies could help you?

- [ ] 1 2 3 4 5

Limited Knowledge

**Team Building:**

26. How comfortable are you with problem solving?

- [ ] 1 2 3 4 5

Not Comfortable

27. Do you think you are able to follow instruction and listen effectively?

- [ ] 1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree

28. Do you think being able to work with others is an important skill?

- [ ] 1 2 3 4 5

Not Important

29. How comfortable are you working with a team?

- [ ] 1 2 3 4 5

Not Comfortable

30. Do you think you have the skills to be a good leader?

- [ ] 1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree
Appendix C: Life-Skills Assessment Post-Measure

Life Skills Post-Assessment

Overview:

This assessment consists of 30 questions that will be answered using a Likert rating scale of 1 - 5. The assessment should be completed using a pencil or pen. The assessment should take no longer than thirty minutes to complete. The assessment will be completed twice, once before the program begins and once immediately after the program finishes. The assessment will be used to examine the effectiveness of the life skills program in teaching skills in the five chosen domains.

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Community Engagement – Community engagement refers to the process by which community organizations and individuals build ongoing, permanent relationships for the benefit of a community.

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   □ □ □ □ □  
   1 2 3 4 5  
   Not Comfortable Very Comfortable

2. Do you know what credit is?
   □ □  
   Yes No  
   If yes, continue to question 3. If no, continue to question 4.

3. How important do you think it is to have good credit?
   □ □ □ □ □  
   1 2 3 4 5  
   Not Important Very Important

4. How important do you think it is to save money?
   □ □ □ □ □  
   1 2 3 4 5  
   Not Important Very Important

5. How important is it to be responsible for your banking information?
   □ □ □ □ □  
   1 2 3 4 5  
   Not Important Very Important

6. How helpful would you a budget be to help you now and in your future?
   □ □ □ □ □  
   1 2 3 4 5  
   Not Helpful Very Helpful

7. The world is going 'digital'; do you think this will affect the way you do banking?
   □ □ □ □ □  
   1 2 3 4 5  
   No Affect Significant Affect

Nutrition/Diet:
8. How important do you think it is to lead a healthy lifestyle?
   □ □ □ □ □  
   1 2 3 4 5  
   Not Important Very Important

9. Do you know what a healthy meal is?
   □ □  
   Yes No

10. After partaking in the life skills program, how often do you think you’ll cook at home?
    □ □ □ □ □  
    1 2 3 4 5  
    Never Frequently
11. Do you feel comfortable planning a healthy meal?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

Very Uncomfortable	Very Comfortable

12. Do you feel comfortable navigating the grocery store to identify and select healthy and affordable foods?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

Very Uncomfortable	Very Comfortable

13. Do you feel comfortable comparing different food products by reading nutrition facts and comparing unit prices?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

Very Uncomfortable	Very Comfortable

Employability:

14. Do you have a resume?

[ ] [ ]

Yes	No

If yes, continue to question 15. If no, continue to question 16.

15. How happy are you with your resume?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

Not happy	Very happy

16. How confident are you in your ability to talk to a potential employer?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

Not confident	Very confident

17. How confident are you with online applications?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

Not confident	Very confident

18. How prepared do you feel for an interview?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

Not prepared	Very prepared

19. Do you feel you have appropriate interview clothing?

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

1 2 3 4 5

No appropriate clothing	Very appropriate clothing

Community Engagement:

20. Have you been involved in your community (i.e. volunteering)?

[ ] [ ]

Yes	No
21. Do you think it is important to be involved in your community?

1 2 3 4 5

No Importance Very Important

22. Do you think it is important to give back to your community?

1 2 3 4 5

No Importance Very Important

23. Do you know which agencies in Kingston provide help specifically to youth?

1 2 3 4 5

Limited Knowledge Very Knowledgeable

24. If you found yourself homeless, do you know where you could go?

1 2 3 4 5

Limited Knowledge Very Knowledgeable

25. If you were having difficulties with your mental health, do you know which agencies could help you?

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Team Building:

26. How comfortable are you with problem solving?

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Not Comfortable Very Comfortable

27. Do you think you are able to follow instruction and listen effectively?

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Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

28. Do you think being able to work with others is an important skill?

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Not Important Very Important

29. How comfortable are you working with a team?

1 2 3 4 5

Not Comfortable Very Comfortable

30. Do you think you have the skills to be a good leader?

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree