

## **Change Maker Life Skill Program – A Pilot Study by NIIT Foundation**

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### **Abstract**

Adolescence is a vulnerable age as personality development largely depends on environmental resources and inputs. This age is confronted with many challenges like alcoholism, drug abuse, anti-social acts, etc. that can have a detrimental effect on adolescent's. Developing life skills is important to equip adolescents to handle life better. The objective of the present study is to examine the development of life skills on school going students studying in government, private and NGO run schools through a structured training intervention. The focus of the training intervention was on nurturing four major life skills namely effective communication, collaboration, problem solving and achievement motivation in a blended delivery model for a month. The results of the study reveal a significant impact on overall life skills among adolescents. However, some skills showed greater impact while others did not. This builds a case for increasing the duration of the intervention or having more sessions as the training intervention has a positive impact on the lives of the students.

### **Keywords**

Life Skills,  
Development,  
Stress,  
Well-being,  
Adolescence

### **Background**

Today's youth are facing challenges like global warming, unemployment, lack of job security, famines, poverty, suicide, population explosion and recently COVID-19. All this has impacted their social, emotional, physical, and psychological health. Unfortunately, this is the reality that they have to live with. The only

respite is if they are able to develop skills that can help them cope with harsh realities. If not addressed immediately it can have far-reaching implications on their well-being. Adolescence is a vulnerable age wherein youth start to develop and nurture relationships beyond parents and family. They are influenced by their peers and the outside world. They also start to understand themselves and what they wish to aspire to and become.

Education plays a significant role in making the lives of the youth better. If given the right education, they can choose to overcome the challenges and work towards a better future. In India education provided is more knowledge based than skill based. We are still struggling to provide adequate infrastructure, good quality teachers, etc. (Mitra, Dangwal and Thadani, 2008).

Education needs to focus on developing appropriate skills, attitudes, and values (Keyes and Haidt, 2002). Developing skills needs to occupy an important place in the teaching learning process. These life skills are numerous namely, communication skills, techno-savvy skills, info-savvy skills, techno-pedagogy skills, spiritual skills, research skills, etc. Life skills empower young people in their personal and professional domains. They are skills that help youth to face everyday challenges with a positive attitude and do their chores effectively. Schools therefore need to impart life skills education programs as a part of their curriculum. Imparting life skills education to youth can help in providing cognitive, emotional, social, and self-management skills for life adjustments. Yadav P, Iqbal N (2009) showed positive results of imparting life skills education to students and bringing the change in adolescent's attitude, thought and behavior by providing supportive environment to them. National Curriculum Framework (2005) rightly observes that the "future" of child has taken the center stage to the near exclusion of the child's present, which is detrimental to the wellbeing of the child as well as the society and nation. Dawes et al (1997) state that child and adolescent mental health includes a sense of identity and self-worth, sound family and peer relationships, an ability to be productive and to learn and a capacity to use developmental challenges and cultural resources to maximize development. Good mental health in childhood is a prerequisite for optimal psychological development, productive social relationships, effective learning. Wanjama (2006) calls them 'shock absorbers' whose focus is the development of an individual in totality.

UNICEF defines Life Skills as "a behavior change or behavior development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills". Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge (what one knows), attitudes and values (what one believes and feels) into actual abilities/action (what to do and how to do it).

### **NIIT Foundation**

NIIT Foundation (NF) is a not-for-profit education society (NGO) set up by the promoters of NIIT in 2004. It's mission is to positively impact the underprivileged of the country through educational initiatives and skill development programs. NIIT Foundation has been delivering projects ranging from customized CSR activities, school programs, college collaborations, community initiatives, career and skill development courses, digital literacy and financial literacy programs and more. It has set up skill development and vocational training centers in urban and rural areas that offer placement support to all eligible students.

### **NIIT Foundation and UNICEF Collaboration**

NF and UNICEF collaborated to conduct a pilot study named "Student Change Maker Life Skill Program". It is designed for students who belong to the underprivileged sections of society. Belonging to a lower socio-economic stratum poses its own set of challenges for these students. Majority of these students' study in a Government or Government aided schools or NGO based schools. These schools have limited resources whether financial, educational, or informational.

The program is designed on the concept of Genuine Contact Methodology i.e., to open the space for self-reflection and peer-to-peer learning, encouraging students to examine their beliefs as they ponder over important choices available to them. Any transformation must come from 'inside out' for it to be deep and permanent. Thus, this program intends to enable students to reflect on the choices they make to lead happy, fulfilled lives.

## Objective

To study the impact of NIIT Foundation's life skill intervention program on adolescents of government schools, government-aided schools (private) and schools run by NGOs.

## Duration

The program started in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of December 2021 and concluded towards the end of March 2022. NIIT Foundation implemented the program while the Centre for Science of Student Learning Assessment (CSSL), under UNICEF, was the assessment partner. CSSL conducted baseline and end line assessments. The duration of the program was one month.

## Facilitator Qualifications

The facilitators who took the sessions were graduates or post graduates with an expertise in life skill training. Each trainer was certified in the 'Genuine Contact & Whole Person Process Facilitation' program by NIIT Foundation.

## Research Design

The present research study is exploratory in nature.

## Variables

- Independent Variable: Adolescents studying in Government schools, Government aided schools and NGO based schools.
- Dependant Variable: Life skills

## Sample

The program was implemented in 3 states of India namely, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Haryana. It was administered on a large sample (N=2299) but was successfully implemented on 981 students in the age range 13 to 18 years studying in grades 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> in a Hybrid mode (online sessions and classroom sessions).

## Test

"Future Readiness Skills Assessment" Tool created under the Life Skills Collaborative (LSC) measures 13 life skills. Each of the 13 skills have 4 questions each. Thus, the total number of questions was 54. Each question had a maximum mark of 1. The testing time was not more than 90 minutes. The mode of test conduction was digital and paper-pencil. It was administered in 5 dialects namely, English, Hindi, Marathi, Kannada and Telugu.

NIIT Foundation program in particular focusses on three major skills namely, Effective communication, Collaboration and Achievement motivation. As the tool was testing for Problem solving, NF also measured Problem solving even though the intervention program did not directly address this skill. Thus, all the 13 life skills were clustered into four major life skill categories (as stated above).

## Methodology

The program was delivered in a 'hybrid' mode – self-study available online and live sessions delivered in a classroom setting. The program ran for a month starting with 1 day student orientation to enroll them in the program. There were 10 live sessions consisting of 80 minutes each and 9-hour self-study sessions (includes 3 hours for assignment). The self-study included watching videos, ppts, pdf files. Students connected through their mobile phones, laptops or computers when using the online platform i.e., the LMS. Batches of 25 students was formed. The classes were held thrice a week with a 2-day F2F orientation program.

The program is designed with a unique concept of 'Genuine Contact Methodology' to engage the whole person (mind, emotions, spirit, and body) considering various learning styles.

**Procedure**

Government, Government aided (Private) and NGO schools were identified. Those schools that understood the program got selected. In total there were 19 schools. Facilitators oriented the school management about the program and also conducted orientation sessions with students. Permissions were sought from school authorities to conduct face-to-face batch orientations. Webinars were conducted to orient parents about the program. Facilitators and trainers were in regular touch with students through the entire duration of the program. Facilitators along with school authorities jointly recorded students' experiences by creating WhatsApp groups and interacting with them on a regular basis. Trainers delivered sessions late evenings as well as on weekends for those students who did not have their own mobile phones and were using their parents' phones.

**Statistical analysis and Interpretation of the Test Scores**

1. To facilitate comparison of all scores, as well as to facilitate comparison between baseline

and endline, a common scale has been constructed using the modern Item Response Theory. The overall scaled score thus obtained has a mean of 500 and SD of 100.

2. Most of the scaled scores are expected to fall between 200 and 800 (-3SD to +3SD of a normal curve). Scores below 200 and above 800 are likely to be outliers (i.e., beyond the normal curve).
3. To check if a programme is effective, the change in the scaled scores between endline and baseline of the programme is to be considered. (i.e., endline score – baseline score). If this change is positive, then the students are scoring better than baseline after taking the programme. If this change is negative, then the students are scoring lower than baseline after taking the programme.
4. However, while a positive or a negative score provides the direction of change, it needs to be checked for statistical significance to see if the change in scores is statistically meaningful.
5. 'Cohen's d' is used to calculate effect size. It can be interpreted to be as follows: large magnitude >0.8, medium magnitude >0.5, small magnitude >0.2.

Table1.0: Interpretation of scores

Positive	Significant	High	Learners have shown high improvement
Positive	Significant	Medium	Learners have shown medium improvement
Positive	Significant	Low	Learners have shown low improvement
Positive	Significant/ Insignificant	Negligible	There is no meaningful difference between learner scores between baseline and endline*
Negative	Significant/ Insignificant	Negligible	There is no meaningful difference between learner scores and between baseline and endline*
Negative	Significant	Low/Medium /High	Learners have shown a meaningfully lower than baseline performance#

## Findings and Discussion

Figure 1.0: Overall Performance of NIIT Foundation students

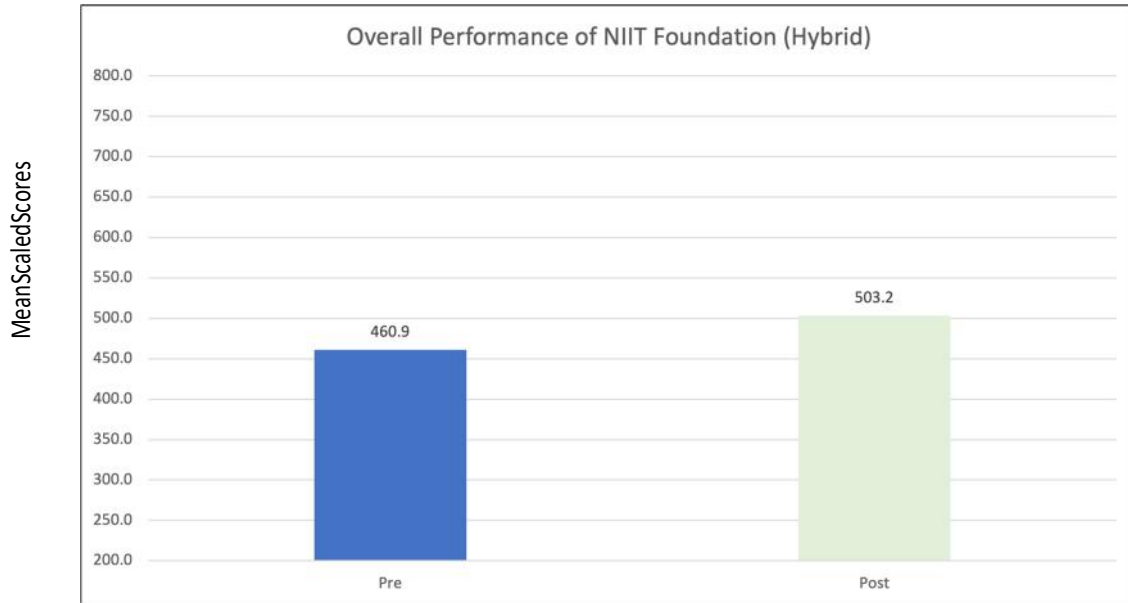


Table 2.0: Overall Performance of NIIT Foundation students

N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	Significance test result	Effect size	Interpretation
981	460.9	77.8	981	503.2	88.6	Significant	0.51	Medium Effect

If we examine Figure 1.0 and Table 2.0, it is evident that there is significant difference in the baseline vs. endline performance of all the students who participated in the program. The impact is significantly medium. Thereby,

indicating that students have benefitted from the intervention. A more detailed analysis given below (fig 2.0) will tell us which skills have had a significant impact on these students.

Figure 2.0: Skill-wise Performance

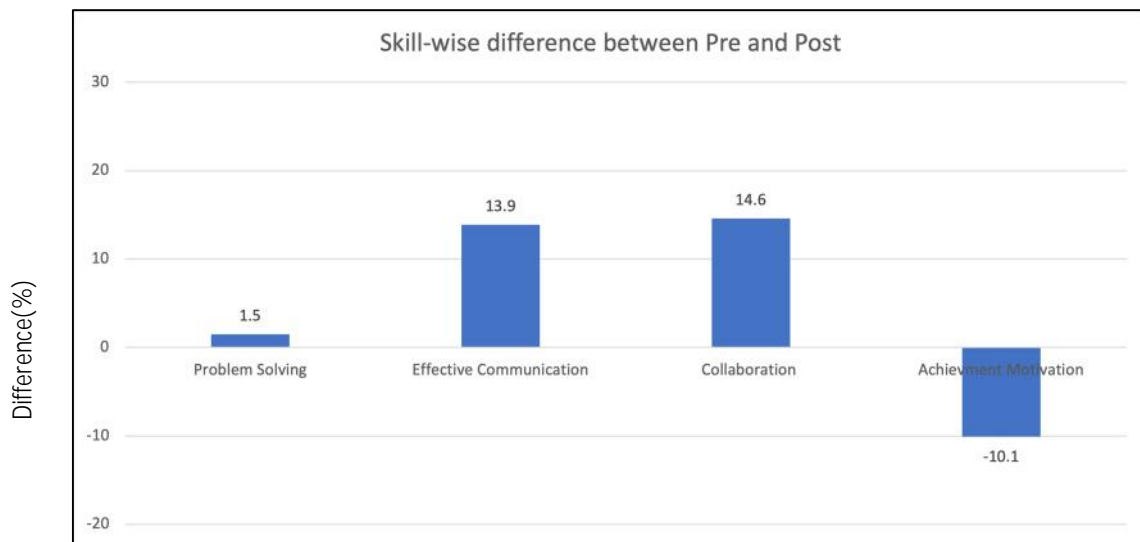


Table 3.0: Skill-wise Performance

Skill no	Skill	Baseline score %	Baseline SD	Endline Score	Endline SD	Difference	Significant	Effect Size	Interpretation
1	Problem Solving	14.1	12.0	15.6	11.9	1.5	Not Significant	.12	Negligible effect
2	Effective Communication	34.3	23.1	48.2	25.4	13.9	Significant	0.57	Medium effect
3	Collaboration	36.1	24.7	50.7.9	27.3	14.6	Significant	0.56	Medium effect
4	Achievement Motivation	33.0	25.4	23.0	29.0	-10.1	Negative Significant	-.36	Small Effect

As observed in Table 3.0, out of the four skills:

- Achievement Motivation has a negative significant small effect. This means that the students have shown a meaningfully lower than baseline performance. One of the probable reasons could be the intervention itself. The focus of the intervention does not seem to focus on achievement motivation in specific.
- Problem-Solving skills have a non-significant eligible effect. This implies that there is no meaningful difference between learner scores between baseline and endline. Interestingly,

NF did not include this skill in the intervention but assessed it as it was included in the tool. Any findings are not incidental in nature as Problem Solving is a skill that overlaps with other skills. According to Greiff et al (2014), Domain-general problem solving is arguably the most prominent of the cross-curricular skills that have a particular relevance for education.

- Collaboration skills and Effective Communication skills have a significant medium effect. Thereby implying that the students have had a reasonably significant impact in their performance.

Figure 3.0: Age-wise Performance

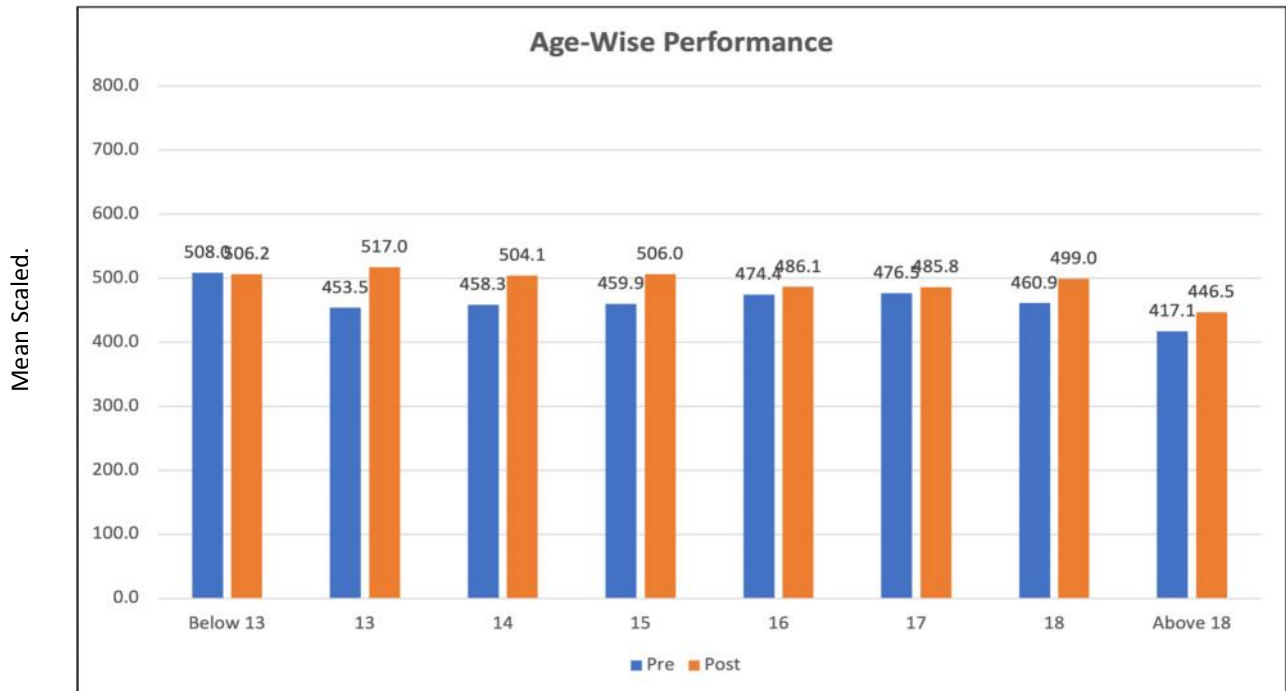


Table 4.0: Age-wise Performance

S. no	State	Baseline			Endline			Significant test result	Effect size	Interpretation
		N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD			
1	Below 13	9	508.0	93.24	9	506.2	104.2	Not Significant	-.02	Negligible effect
2	Age 13	148	453.55	85.94	148	516.97	68.7	Significant	.82	Large effect
3	Age 14	375	458.3	76.0	375	504.1	73.3	Significant	0.61	Medium effect
4	Age 15	268	459.9	70.4	268	506.0	95.6	Significant	.56	Medium effect
5	Age 16	113	474.4	78.8	113	486.1	117.3	Not Significant	.12	Negligible effect
6	Age 17	43	476.5	93.5	43	485.8	113.8	Not Significant	.09	Negligible effect
7	Age 18	18	460.9	78.0	18	499.0	106.8	Not Significant	.41	Small effect
8	Above 18	7	417.1	85.2	7	446.5	114.4	Not Significant	.30	Small effect

Fig 3.0 and Table 4.0, further examine age-wise differences in their performance.

- There is no significant difference in the pre and post marks of students below 13 years, 16 years, 17 years, 18 years and above 18 years. This indicates that these students did not benefit from the intervention.
- One probable reason for no significant difference for students below 13 years, 18

- years and above 18 years could be the low number. N= 9, N = 18 and N= 7, respectively.
- Students in the age category of 13 years, 14 years and 15 years have benefitted significantly from the program even though its impact is small.
- One possible reason for the small impact could be the duration of the intervention itself. Maybe if the intervention period was longer or had multiple sessions.

Figure 4.0: Gender-wise Performance

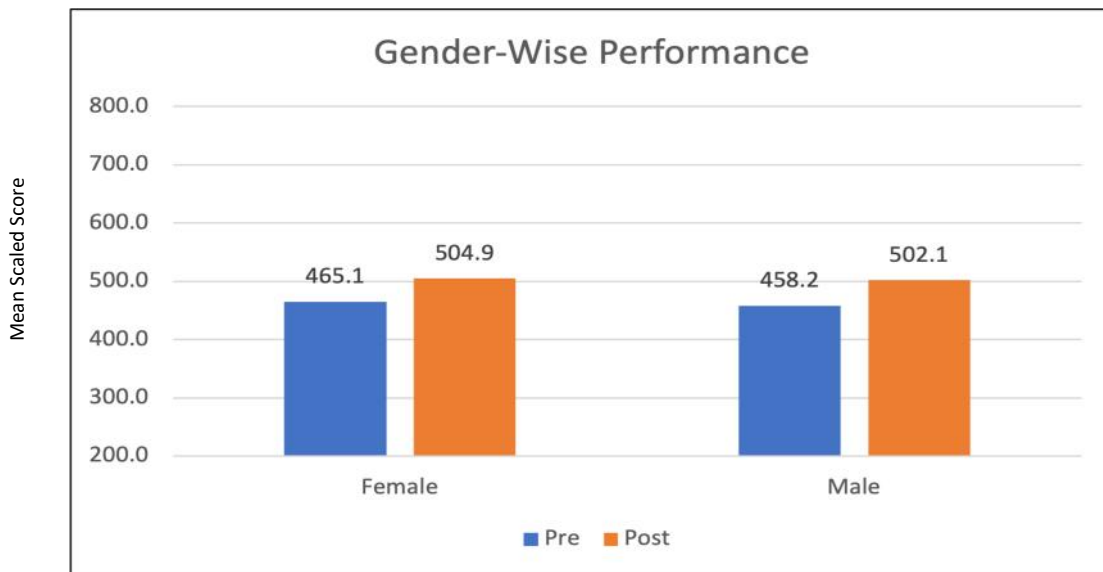


Table 5.0: Gender wise Performance

S.no	State	Baseline			Endline			Significant test result	Effect size	Interpretation
		N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD			
1	Female	390	465.06	80.80	390	504.86	91.51	Significant	.51	Medium effect
2	Male	591	458.15	75.63	591	502.14	86.65	Significant	.54	Medium effect

Figure 4.0 and table 5.0 discuss the pre and post-performance of males vs. female students. There is a significant difference in their pre and post marks for both these students. In other words, gender has not been affected by the intervention.

According to KIE 2008a, effective implementation of life skills' education enhances the wellbeing of a society and promotes a positive outlook and healthy behaviour to both boys and girls. Thus, life skills are not dependent on gender.

Figure 5.0: State-wise Performance

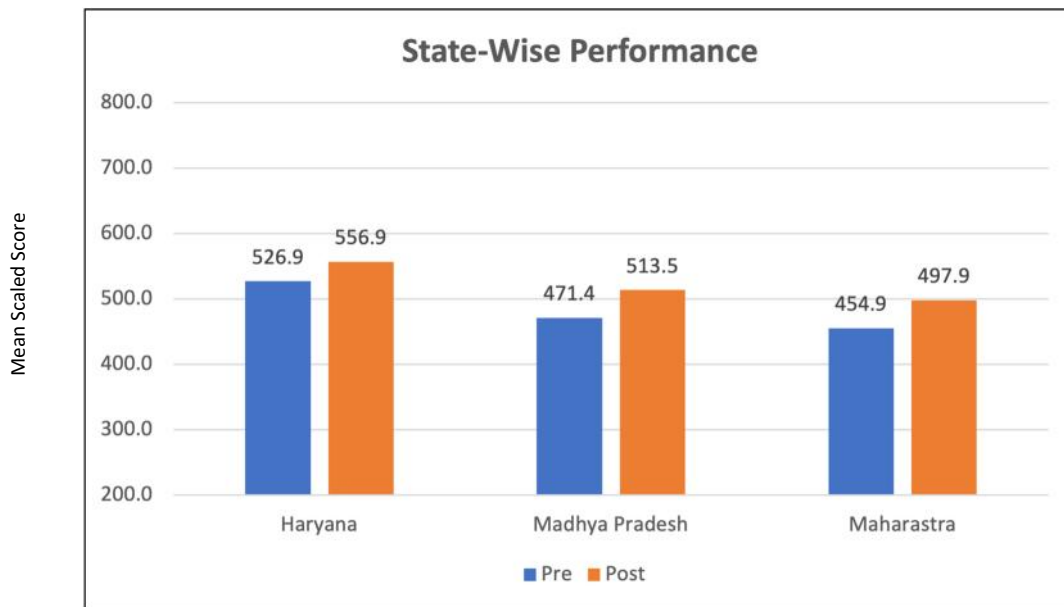


Table 6.0: State-Wise Performance

S.no	State	Baseline			Endline			Significant test result	Effect size	Interpretation
		N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD			
1	Haryana	38	526.90	100.78	38	556.86	56.87	Not Significant	.38	Small effect
2	Madhya Pradesh	189	471.38	84.47	189	513.49	82.48	Significant	.50	Medium effect
3	Maharashtra	754	454.95	72.84	754	497.94	90.3	Significant	.53	Medium effect



Figure 5.0 and Table 6.0 indicate performance across the 3 states namely Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra.

- ) In Haryana state, there is no significant difference in the pre and post-performance of students.
- o This means students belonging to Haryana

state have not benefitted from the program. One of the possible reasons could be the low number of students who participated in the intervention (N=38).

- ) Students from Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra seem to have significantly benefitted from the program with medium effect.

Figure 6.0: School-Wise Performance

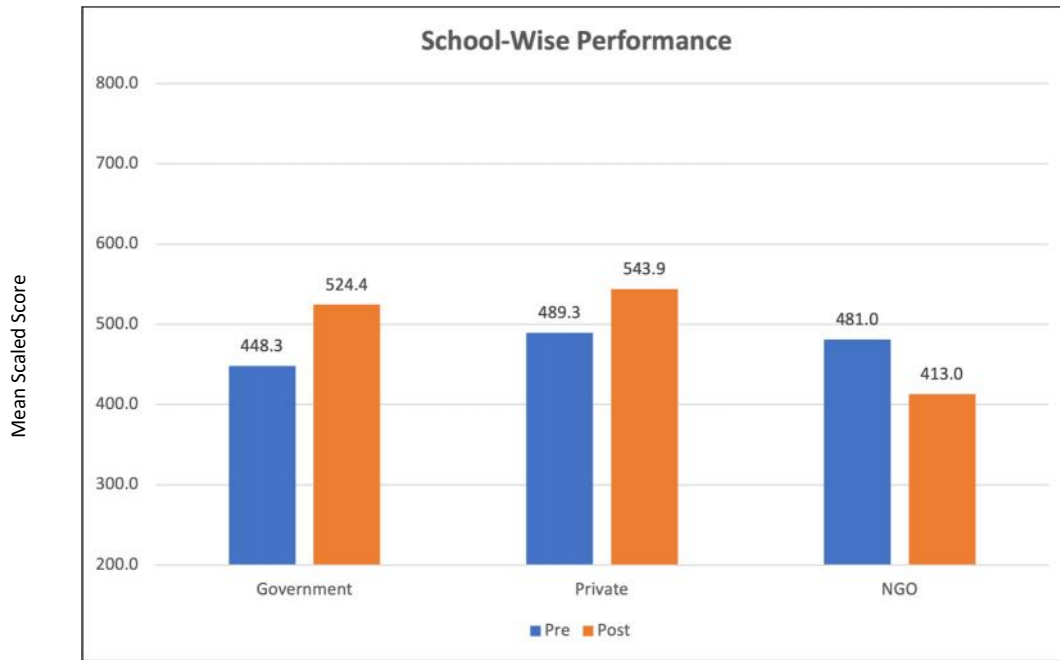


Table 7.0: School-Wise Performance

S.no	School	Baseline			Endline			Significant test result	Effect size	Interpretation
		N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD			
1	Government	637	448.31	67.82	637	524.39	65.31	Significant	1.14	Large effect
2	Private (i.e. Government aided)	134	489.29	91.53	134	543.89	74.7	Significant	0.66	Medium effect
3	NGO	210	481.0	87.3	210	413.0	98.3	Significant Negative	-0.07	Negligible effect

Fig 6.0 and Table 7.0 indicate the performance of students' school wise. There is a significant difference in the pre and post-performance of students studying in government and government aided (private) schools. While no significant difference in pre and post-performance in schools run by NGOs. Students studying in this category

of school have shown a meaningfully lower than baseline performance.

However, as stated students studying in the two schools have benefitted wherein large effect is observed in government schools and medium effect in private schools.

Government schools are owned and controlled by the government. The government oversees the curriculum, study materials, fee structure, syllabus, examinations, etc. of these schools. Whereas, government aided schools are owned by a private management but gets aid from the government. Although, the private management controls the curriculum, study materials, syllabus, examinations, etc of the school but it follows the same academic rules and regulations laid down by the government as that of a government school.

It is evident that irrespective of the poor backgrounds, students coming from lower socio-economic strata seem to benefit from the program. Hence, re-iterating the need for government and other bodies to focus on this section of the society.

### Highlights of the Program

1. There has been a significant overall impact in the performance of students exposed to the program.
2. Out of the four skills measured by NF, Collaboration skills and Effective communication skills seem to have significant impact.
3. Students in the age category of 13 years, 14 years and 15 years have benefitted significantly from the program.
4. Students from Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have significantly benefitted from the program.
5. Students studying in government and government aided schools have significantly benefitted from the program. Both male and female students have equally benefitted.
6. Despite the pandemic and following Covid safety protocols, a large number of students from different schools across different geographical areas participated in this program.

### Limitations

The results are encouraging as the intervention program suggests significant learnings. However, there are a few limitations that need to be addressed for a greater impact.

- There were a few challenges faced due to the onset of COVID. The program relied heavily on students having mobile phones/laptops. A few students did not have personal mobile phones and hence were dependent on their parents.
- Internet was an issue especially in some remote parts of the cities.
- The program needs to either increase in duration or have multiple sessions for a larger significant impact.
- It is clear that the program needs to cater to self-awareness, achievement motivation and problem-solving skills.

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