

## **Trainers' Tool: Adhering to VARK<sup>©</sup> Learning Styles for Tutoring Students in Soft Skills through J.K.Rowling's Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets**

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**Abstract:** *Literature serves as a valuable resource for imparting soft skills to the students because of its nature to influence the person who comes in touch with literature emotionally regardless of age and gender. This article emphasizes the importance of using literature to coach students in soft skills through J.K.Rowling's 'Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets' using the VARK learning style method. Students often fail to show interest in acquiring soft skills through classroom teaching method. So VARK method is adopted to create interest in the students for equipping themselves with Soft Skills. Two different classes (Class A &B) are taken to test the approach and a test was conducted with the same pattern of questions after regular lecturing class and after using VARK learning style. The results depicted through a statistical analysis show that the visual, auditory, reading and kinesthetic (VARK) model will help in improving soft skills.*

**Key words:** *Soft Skills, Stress Management, Team Work, Literature, Lecturing, VARK Inventory Method (video, Aural, Reading and Kinesthetic).*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The business set-up in the present day faces great challenges and changes day by day due to increase in the competition in the global market and also owing to the technological development. The rules for succeeding in trade depend on how well the employers manage their customers and employees. In order to gain the competitive advantage, the employees need to handle themselves well in the workplace and manage their customers and peers. Soft skills help an individual or an employee to manage the challenging situations of professional and personal life.

Soft Skills or behavioural skills play an imperative role in a person's success as they help the person to adapt to the situations. Instilling the use of soft skills in team members is something imperative for the workplace. A person with good soft skills is considered as a valued asset to family, friends, co-workers and society.

The need for acquiring soft skills is gaining momentum in colleges as the percentage of employable graduates is decreasing every year. This is due to the fact that technically qualified graduates are failing to adapt themselves to the workplace atmosphere where people of different culture and caliber have to be dealt with. Research has proved that the traditional system of emphasising technical knowledge alone for the success of an organisation is no longer successful. This is because of the fact, that, they exhibit only the strengths rather than the revelation of our human nature. Moreover, most of the companies believe in team work which on the other hand depends directly on the team members' co-operation.

In order to meet the challenges of the corporate sectors, educational institutions have started realising the necessity to inculcate soft skills in their students. It is evident that apart from teaching technical skills or hard skills, training in soft skills has increased the recruitment rate in most of the colleges. Moreover, students who are the future employees have to deal more with soft skills than with actual knowledge about particular situation because customers appreciate an employee who is willing to help and listen to the complaint. This is what elevates an organization in the global market because a company cannot succeed only with product anymore but can thrive with how well employees are being used.

Soft skills are the behavioural skills like responsibility, self esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity and interpersonal skills which are essential when involving oneself in a project as a team player, teaching others, serving customers, exercising leadership, negotiating and working within culturally diverse situations which help to trademark a company for professionalism and excellent customer service. In recent years, building soft skills is gaining momentum in colleges as it facilitates students to improve their confidence, team skill, interpersonal skills, stress management, self control, decision making, creativity, lateral thinking etc., to enable them to face challenges in corporate sectors. It is found that the students are better placed when they exercise leadership, communication and general management alongside hard skills.

In today's working environment, where customers and employees are demanding more, instilling the use of soft skills in your team members is something you simply can't survive without'. (Carole Nicolaides 2002).

More and more corporations around the world make out that in order to develop a competitive gain; they also have to make sure that their employees know how to grip themselves at work and how to communicate with their customers and peers. Soft skills are an integral part of a progressive organization and employees must be skilled at soft skills for the betterment of the company. Some of the vital soft skills are problem solving skills, cognitive skills, oral communication skills, personal skills, interpersonal skills and teamwork skills. A student has to acquire these while on campus in the best interests of his/her own careers in the future because a student with prior knowledge of workplace atmosphere will cope up with the skill demands of industry easily. Unfortunately, these soft skills are laid aside and emphasis has been given much on the expertise and testimonials by many educational institutions which has resulted in the increase in the number of unemployable graduates in the technical education. Hence training the students in soft skills has become the main agenda in colleges. Students are being trained by different training bodies like soft skill trainers, industrial experts, career advisors, etc. The language teacher can play a great role in inculcating soft skills to the students through literature. Literature serves as a wonderful tool to inculcate soft skills in the students. This paper emphasizes the role of literature in training college students in soft skills and analyses the possibility and scope for using 'Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets' for imparting these skills to the students through VARK leaning style method.

## **II. LITERATURE AND SOFT SKILLS**

Keeping a large number of undergraduate students continually engaged in a classroom is a Herculean task. A different and dynamic teaching approach becomes inevitable to stimulate the students in the place of traditional lecturing styles which are based essentially on one-way communication. If students have to frequently respond, discuss, react or participate, they will be far less likely to disengage or go to sleep. Offering soft skills training through literature involves some strategies and it needs the involvement of both the teacher and the students.

There are many advantages in using literary genres like stories, novels and poems for imparting soft skills to the students. As the conventional method of teaching will serve only to the minimum, using literature can serve as a wonderful source for the students to explore different vocabularies, linguistic uses and forms because the learner comes to know about the people, social background, customs, thoughts, feeling and culture of that particular country and age. Teaching novels in the class is a shared experience as the teacher and the students involve in discussing the characters and the plot through various activities. This exposure will enhance their knowledge and pave way for effective acquisition of soft skills.

## **III. PERSONIFICATION OF SOFT SKILLS J.K. ROWLING'S HARRY POTTER NOVELS**

### **Leadership Quality In Harry Potter Novels**

J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter novels speak about Hogwarts School, a high school for the magically gifted which has created a great impact in the field of education. Harry Potter "The boy who lived" has become the boy who has captured the hearts and imagination of students and has invoked new tools to understand and structure learning and right before.

In 2004, seven years after the publication of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone and the right before (Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince's 2005). NASPA and ACPA – two leading associations of higher educational professionals – published 'Learning Reconsidered'. A campus wide focus on the student experience in which they insist that distinction among terms such as personal development, student development and learning are meaningless, if not destructive claiming that focus on education must shift from information transfer to identity development transformation.

J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter is depicted as an exceptional student who is capable of leading in the midst of battle by knowing his identity as a wizard. Harry's leadership quality is confirmed by his willingness to die for his friends and caretakers. On the other hand, the negative leadership qualities are expressed by Lord Voldemort and administrators of ministry of magic by manipulation and control over others.

Harry acquires his leadership skill only through his sufferings. Even though Harry is mentally strong and intelligent and depicted as a young man who turns suffering into the motivation to create goodness, he gets moulded through his experience in school. Harry loses his parents; godfather Sirius Black his teacher, Prof. Dumbledore in his struggle. He also experiences troubles at the hands of the ministry. These sufferings strengthen Harry and depict him as a kind of leader that organizations need in times of crisis. Harry possesses the qualities of a true leader such as courage, determination, perseverance, resilience, etc. He speaks through action and helps his students by teaching the techniques to fight against Voldemort. This training helps them a lot when Harry finally sacrifices his life in order for Voldemort to truly be vanquished.

Hermione as a girl is depicted by the author as an intelligent and extraordinary individual who helps Harry in his adventures in the novel. Hermione balances her academics and social interactions wonderfully. She becomes inseparable from Ron and Harry. This is clear from Hermione's statement with Harry.

'I am not as good as you' said Harry 'Me!' said Hermione. 'Books!' And cleverness! There are more important things – friendship and bravery and – oh Harry – be careful. Hermione has deep consideration for Harry's welfare and acts as a perfect team player in guiding Harry and Ron. She not only involves in acquiring knowledge, but she applies them in her practical life in times of crisis to succeed.

### **Interpersonal Relationship**

J.K. Rowling picturizes the environment of Hogwarts that help the students learn good interpersonal relationship. The school set up is such that all the members of the same house must live together and attend classes together. The senior students help the junior. Harry as a senior student helps his peer by teaching them magical culture. The school system gives more importance to the cultivation of good behaviour. The houses at Hogwarts are awarded with grade points for each and every action of the members. Hogwarts acts as a system which transforms the teenagers into young adults. Students learn to realize their power and become independent. This transformation starts as early as the students board the Hogwarts express from platform 9 ¾ leaving their parents. Hogwarts not only helps in physiological, emotional and cognitive development of the student characters in the novel but also its readers. Hogwarts fosters learning as soon as students arrive on campus. Teaching includes theoretical knowledge incorporated with building of practical life skills and moral development at Hogwarts. J.K. Rowling has created a wonderful atmosphere through Hogwarts which offers academics along with challenges, communal responsibility, experiential learning. Harry Potter series teaches its readers valuable life skills and excellent moral values. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the Harry Potter novel has made transformation in the lives millions of readers through Hogwarts and its characters.

### **Team Work**

J.K. Rowling has done well in creating a successful team through her characters. Harry works as a team along with Ron and Hermione as his partners of the team. The way they communicate, serve as a good example of how a team of people need to interact and care for one another. Farah Mendlesohn in her critical essay titled 'Crowning the King' speaks about the teamwork. She says that, Where Harry's success does not rest on inheritance whether material or genetic it rests instead on the attributes of his companions. Repeatedly in the Potter books it is not Potter who displays ingenuity, intelligence or bravery, but his companions, the redoubtable and brilliant Hermione; the kind reckless and incredibly strong Hagrid the faithful and dogged Ron. (Farah Mendlesohn 2002).

The caring is vital because it is the basis for developing trust and honesty among the team members. They were able to manage the ups and downs only because of their cordial relationship. J.K. Rowling has paid more attention in developing Harry's character. The whole story is about the development of Harry's character where he confronts Voldemart without fear. It doesn't mean that he is not afraid of the dangers but for the safety of his near and dear ones. This is clear in the end of the Chamber of Secrets where Ginny realises that she has been responsible for the attacks, she attempts to throw the diary away, which comes into Harry's possession. Riddle then releases the snake Basilisk so kill Harry. Dumbledore's pet phoenix, Fawkes, brings a magnificent sword wrapped in the Sorting Hat. Harry uses the sword to kill the basilisk – but only after being bitten by the creature's venomous fangs, one of which breaks off. As Riddle is feeling happy over the dying Harry, Fawkes cures him with its tears. Harry stabs the diary with the broken fang and Riddle screams and vanishes. Ginny revives after Riddle's disappearance and they return to Ron, who is still watching over the amnesic Lockhart. Fawkes carries all the four out of the tunnels. This true friendship and togetherness in Harry is needed among today's professionals. The closest literary example of Harry Potter's team work is the story of Frodo's journey to mount doom in the Lord of the Rings. Frodo steps forward and accepts the role of sufferer as ring bearer. He is able to do so because a fellowship of men, hobbits, elves and trolls join him in the journey as a team. Frodo is able to bear the suffering through the faithful friendship of Sam. Through suffering and the acceptance of his own mortality, Frodo does his duty and accomplishes what no other in this story could do. Frodo is a great hobbit who manages to save the world despite his giving in at the last crucial moment where the ring takes final possession of him.

Rowling's view of depicting suffering is something different from the contemporary novels where suffering is viewed as a victimization of a person rather than an experience that leads to strength, courage friendship and life skills. J.K. Rowling teaches useful life skills through her Harry Potter series. Basically, the Harry Potter story is a frugal journey to put an end to the tortures of Voldemart. Harry plays a major role in this story in defeating the evil force. Harry's friend Ron and Hermione share it in equal measure in helping Harry in his crusade. Harry as a team leader and Ron as a perfect team member teaches the lessons on life skills.

Hermione through her pure love for her friends in times of challenges possess inherent qualities for a meaningful life which is true love. The Harry Potter stories teach perseverance and resilience to its readers.

In the day to day life each one has the problems and try to seek a solution for the problem. It is not easy always to know where the solution for the problem lies. Sometimes the solution may be in the hand, like a Horcrux and don't know what to do with it, even then. The answer is patience and persistence in looking for clues for the answer. Professional people experience the suffering of failure and its consequences yet, they are not supposed to expose it. The lesson they can learn through Harry is strength through suffering which can save them during the time of financial hardship. The author successfully teaches the value of sacrifice, which very important for the life. Dobby, the house elf that has been from servitude by Harry Potter in Chamber of Secrets, returns to save Harry and to give his life in the end. 'I wish no one suffering that said' sacrifice can serve to bring perspective to the lives. Thus the author is successful in showing us life skills for our practical life through her novels.

#### **IV. REVIEW OF JOURNAL ARTICLES ON THE HARRY POTTER SERIES**

Many scholarly articles have appeared in prestigious journals related to the literary purpose of the Harry Potter series. A few of these journal articles are scrutinized to understand the implication that their findings will have on the theme (soft skills) currently undertaken.

Joyce W.Fields (2007) in an article 'Harry Potter, Benjamin Bloom and the Sociological Imagination' published in the International Journal of Teaching and learning in Higher Education, explores the reason for utilizing the J.K.Rowling's Harry Potter series as a teaching tool for introductory sociology courses. He states that, because of the ease in comparing the wizard culture, students apply critical thinking skills and thus increase their ability to think beyond their own, immediate social systems carrying them to stage three and four, application and analysis, in Blooms Taxonomy. She insists that particular theories about the Harry Potter series are illustrations of sociological theories and social processes. Fields explains Harry's socialisation as an obvious one. According to him, Harry reflects Erving Goffman's ideas about the presentation of self largely by managing his wizard self through impression management and the dramaturgical approach. Goffman is interested in showing how small groups and individuals interact and will find Harry a perfect case study as he watches what others do and then performs. He adds that Harry is seen as resocialized not only as a wizard but also as the boy who survives lots of which are new roles for him. Sociologists define the main agents of socialization as family, school, peers, media, the workplace and the state. All these can be seen at work in the life of Harry Potter as he progresses through early adolescence. She suggests that, for this class, students are required to read the first two books or watch the movie adapted from these books. In addition, she insists that they must read the third and fourth books in the series as the movie adaptation omits significant sociological parallels. This article is an interesting viewpoint of a reader who can apply this understanding to the analysis of their own workplace environment.

Thomas.J.Peterson of Grandview College in his article titled 'Applying an attachment based social Neuroscience understanding of J.K.Rowling's Harry Potter series: A tale of two brains?' has applied attachment based Neuroscience principles and research to the best selling fiction series written by J.K.Rowling (2006). He states that, 'Harry Potter books chronicle the adventures of a boy wizard, Harry Potter who destined to battle a powerful and evil adversary Lord Voldemort.' In this paper, the writer compares the attachment backgrounds of the two main characters and the possible brain childhood differences. The writer discusses the Neuroscience research results related to modulation and control of intense impulses in relation to the two characters' ability to inhibit violent behavior and says that, 'Harry Potter was loved, at least initially and at least for one year. Tom Riddle did not get one day let alone one year of "attunement", no smiles greeted him, no comfort from the bleak institution he was left at when his mother died'. Attachment theory predicts two divergent internal working models from these two dissimilar beginnings: 'Harry has a sense albeit an implicit, unspoken one that he mattered to someone, that someone was delighted he was in the world, and someone who cared for him. He has the rudiments of a secure attachment. He has a pilot light left on, a longing to be close and to be comforted. Could it be that Harry's implicit memory of being cared for and the growth enhancing experience of being loved left a legacy of cortical and synaptic connectivity that provided him with some measure of impulse control unavailable to his enemy, Lord Voldemort? Tom Riddle on the other hand has no "secure base", no "safe haven", no assistance in modulating his emotions. His world is in stark contrast to Harry's for the first year. Though Rowling does not describe it in great detail, Tom's time in the orphanage is likely to be filled with benign neglect at best, and more likely, some mixture of shame and humiliation from staff who sees him as an unloved and unwanted child. With no adult affording him the experiences necessary to manage his stress response, he adopted what was labeled above the "low reactivity" path'. This strategy is most similar to the avoidant attachment style which emphasizes self-sufficiency and minimizes distress-related signals, the epitome of the British "stiff upper lip" mode. The haughty, contemptuous bullying he displays in the novels, the delight he takes in taunting and humiliating both his allies and his enemies reflects the extinguishing of all compassion

and empathy, leaving behind only lust for power and control'. Finally the author concludes with a brief discussion of the forensic issues implicated by the burgeoning social Neuroscience literature. The above article speaks about the role of family background in deciding the behavior of the students because of which there are differences in exhibiting the skill among the students.

An article titled 'Harry Potter and the struggle with Childhood' written by Melnie Spector from Vanderbilt University speaks about the character of Harry Potter from J.K.Rowling's series. The writer says that the character of Harry Potter reflects many principles of child development including resilient children, temperament and attachment theory. The hero of the series proves that in spite of severe and terrifying childhood, he not only prevails to be a strong person, normal person, but also the savior of the wizarding world and a hero. Harry was able to defeat the evil power with great power because of his inborn strength and in loving environment. This article helps the main aim of this paper that is, behavior skills of the students can be modified by training them in soft skills through literature.

#### **IV. TYPE OF LITERATURE THAT CAN BE EXPLORED**

One of the challenges that the teachers/soft skills trainers face today is the selection of a suitable literary text to explore in the classroom. There are innumerable varieties of literature available. The job of the teacher/soft skill trainer is to carefully choose the text to deal with the students. Literary texts have a powerful function of raising moral and ethical concerns in the classroom. The task and activities devised to exploit these texts should encourage and connect them with the struggle for a better society. (Gillian Lazer 1993). The text selected must be enjoyable and must provide more scope for soft skills and facilitate the learners in understanding the workplace atmosphere. At the same time, it should be based on the students' reading proficiency, interest, cultural background, etc.

The text chosen should cater to the students' needs ranging from the acquisition of basic knowledge, relevance and purpose of study to skill updating. The text chosen for the classroom teaching should encompass the qualities to endow the needs of the current purpose, relevant to the life experiences, emotions or dreams of the learner. (John Collie & Stephen Slater 1987) 'Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets' which is analyzed in this paper serves the purpose because it deals with the role of individual skills in shaping personal lives and combined destinies. In 1997, the book won 'The British Book Awards for Children's Book of the Year', and the 'Smarties' Prize. The Potter books have gained worldwide attention, sold more than 400 million copies, and has been the basis for a popular series of films.

#### **V. HARRY POTTER SERIES**

The Harry Potter series which is in both movie and book forms, combines fantasy, mystery, suspense, and horror mixed with the realities people face on a day to day basis. The intended audience for these books and movies are children, but adults and children of all ages have also fallen in love with the characters portrayed in the text. Harry Potter has sparked an interest in reading among the entire generation of youth. According to Brozo, who is the author of "To Be a Boy, to Be a Reader," Harry Potter is perceived by many as an acceptable "boy-friendly" text for teens and preteen boys alike, and there just aren't that many books, particularly a series, competing for their attention. The other aspect leading to his popularity is that Harry and his friends offer adolescent males a positive characterization of boyhood and masculinity.

Harry is a decent kid with supernatural powers and potential who is trying to thwart magical forces with untoward intentions, he says.

"In the research for my book, I found plenty of evidence to suggest that boys can increase their interest and skill in reading if exposed to texts that capture their unique male imaginations and present the various positive faces of masculinity. (Colleen Kearney Rich 2007).

Harry Potter series is particularly written for the youngsters and it has created interest for reading among the young readers of the age group between 14 and 20. As Elizabeth E. Heilman rightly points out that Harry Potter has become more than just a book, it has become an 'icon' to know about modern culture.

Harry Potter then is not just books we read or movies we see or things that we buy. The text and images of Harry Potter become part of who we are. This is true of individuals and it is true of "us" as a global culture. (Elizabeth E. Heilman 2009).

The characters of the novel depict the real life characters and the day-to-day challenges faced by them. Harry Potter, the hero of this novel, is an orphan who lives in his aunt's house and his aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon treat him like a slave. Harry does not recognize his magical powers until he is suddenly invited to join Hogwarts, the school for witchcraft and wizardry, where Harry realizes his powers and does adventurous deeds. Harry Potter's success is due in part to the main character's ability to remain humble while overcoming challenges that seem completely unstoppable, and often unbeatable.

Harry Potter is certainly one of the most popular characters in the world. And he's using that popularity to teach us all some lessons about what's really needed for a good life (David Baggett and Shawn E.

Klein 2004) 'Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets', which is the second book in the Harry Potter series of novels deals with Harry's second year of schooling at Hogwarts School of witchcraft and wizardry. This book depicts the various adventures of Harry and his friends in discovering the secrets of the chamber. What has made the Harry Potter books and movies such a phenomenon with global appeal? The answer can be found in the main characters of the Harry Potter context—Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, and Hermione Granger, who are the underdogs that continue to prove themselves by overcoming everyday obstacles, making them the heroes in the end of each fable. A New York Times reporter wrote the following in reference to the life lessons learned through Harry Potter:

If Harry Potter is a reminder that not even magic can solve everything, it is also a promise of hope, sustaining the fundamental childhood belief that in the end, good really does triumph over evil, and justice is meted out to those who deserve it. Harry is an endearingly normal hero, enduring the same romantic insecurities, friendship pressures and temper tantrums that I encounter all the time, and it is oddly comforting to think that such a seemingly ordinary boy could achieve the extraordinary." (*New York Times* July, 2005).

Harry Potter has become a product of popular culture. The Harry Potter stories encourage society by developing a modern day classical narrative where good triumphs over evil and the characters are left to make morally challenging and even heroic decisions.

## **VI. SOFT SKILLS IN HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS**

This novel deals with some of the most important skills like Stress Management and Team Work which are demonstrated throughout the story. From the experiences of Harry Potter, the students will learn more about themselves and also the skills they need to acquire to deal with the challenges they face in life. Harry Potter books are valuable resources for training the students in soft skills because the central character of the series, Harry Potter, leads his life with great challenges and achieves success through hard work. Harry Potter series with adolescent characters, and familiarity of their content, provides an opportunity for teachers to instruct students in soft skills. These skills will assist students in leading their personal lives and professional lives successfully thereby benefiting society as a whole.

### **Team Work**

In today's professional world, team co-operation is an important skill needed for the group members as well as the leader to work smoothly in a team. A team can effectively function only if the team members work with unity, tolerance, minimum conflict, mutual responsibility and commitment towards achieving their goals. Unless managers deeply understand and buy into the idea of the organization as a system, calling groups of workers teams simply won't make any difference (John A. Woods 2004), A team leader should not undermine team members' ideas and every member of the team should be given equal opportunity to express their opinions, teamwork, in a workplace, will help better learning, work specialisation, timely completion, explore creative ideas and finally job success.

### **Team Work in the Novel**

Emphasising on team work co-operation throughout, the novel clearly states that nothing can be achieved by a single person and everything is possible only by helping each other. Even though Harry is depicted as a hero and as a team leader with the inborn magical powers, he breaks the secrets only with the help of his friends Ron and Hermione Granger. Ron and Hermione support Harry through his trials, and he even has "guides" like Dumbledore and Sirius Black. All the three friends together break the secret of the chamber, find the entrance and defeat the beast inside the chamber by working together.

Of all within this circle, Hermoine and Ron have the closest contact with Harry on a daily basis. As his peers they offer him comfort and companionship- a real boon for a developing hero.( Lana A Whited 2002)

The three friends put their special efforts towards achieving their goal. Harry leads them, guides them as and when they meet up with troubles and thus plays the role of a perfect team leader. They depend on each other or on the other sources for support and assistance. This is clear from the story when the Ron's father's floating car saves Harry and Ron as they are about to be eaten by the spiders. When Ron kept vomiting glistening slugs because of using his broken wand to attack Fred and John in the Quidditch ground, Harry and Hermoine take him to Hagrid's house to treat him. On another occasion, when Harry is about to die because of the attack of one of the broken fangs of the basilisk, Dumbledore's pet bird phoenix saves him. Thus, it is the team skill or team co-operation that saves all the three main characters from the dangers and enhances their performance in the story. Harry's life can be taken as an example to emphasize the job skills through team work.

### **Stress Management**

Stress is a common word uttered wherever one goes. Stress which causes mental tension, also leads to deterioration in health and reduction in the capacity to think and act. Stress is not dependent upon whether you

are young or old, boy or girl, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, servant or master. (Pramod Batra 1995). Stress affects all the people irrespective of their age or position. Stress Management can make us regain our strength and managing stress is one of the skills that each and every one must learn to survive in this competitive world.

### **Stress Management in the Novel**

The idea of managing stress is well stated in the story when Dobby, the house elf, comes to Harry's house to prevent Harry from going to school the next year. Dobby troubles Harry in such way that it stops all the letters from his friends thinking that Harry may not go back to school if he thinks that his friends have forgotten him. Harry controls his anger and asks Dobby politely for those letters, but Dobby refuses to give them and asks Harry to promise that he will not return to Hogwarts. But, when Harry does not agree, Dobby spoils the pudding made by Aunt Petunia even after several requests from Harry. Harry's tolerance towards the elf is a wonderful way of managing stress. Harry does not punish Dobby or burst out with anger but bears the activities of Dobby with serenity and controls himself and requests Dobby not to cause any harm because he understands that Dobby is sent by his enemy Draco Malfoy to spoil his career.

Also, Harry manages the torments of his guardians patiently when uncle Vernon insults him and warns him against coming out of the room when the guests arrive. It is clear from the statement of J.K. Rowling in the novel that 'Harry fought to keep his face straight as he emerged' ('Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets'). Even though Harry is aware of his powers, he controls himself and does not use his magical powers to liberate himself from them. Harry is aware of the rule of Hogwarts that 'underage wizards weren't allowed to use magic outside school' ('Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets') and the magical power should not be used on muggles i.e., non-magical people, and also for personal benefits. Harry maintains the rule and does not try to misuse his powers even though he is put under many stressful situations in his guardian's house. One of the reasons for this is Harry's humanness. One can see oneself or one's children in his struggles to find himself and grow up. Harry, then, goes through numerous trials and tribulations a literal wandering in the wilderness during which he struggles to discover who he is and what he is meant to do next. Ron one of his two best friends even deserts him for a while. Finally, however, Harry makes a decision and chooses to act. This decision causes his friends and supporters to line up behind him; determined to either prevail or to die trying, they face ultimate evil together. In the end, Harry does slay Voldemort, the Good does prevail, and the world is saved.

## **VII. METHOD ADOPTED**

Two different classes (class A & class B) each consisting of 50 students are taken for the study. Students belong to the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester of their technical degree course. Their age ranges from 18 to 20 and the overall gender ratio female: male is 30:70. It is ensured that the students have not had any formal training in soft skills prior to the lecture.

### **Method: 1(Lecturing Method)**

Students are supplied with notes about the description of the soft skills namely Stress Management and Team Work. The script of the novel 'Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets' is distributed. List of books related to soft skills is made available in the library for additional reference. First 3 chapters of the novel have been selected for the study. Each lecture lasts for 55 minutes. The lecturer explains the following points in detail:

1. Soft skills required for the workplace generally
2. Impact of soft skills in the lives of the students especially in their career.
3. The importance of acquiring soft skills while students pursue their college education.
4. The role of literature in inculcating soft skills
5. The purpose of using J.K. Rowling's 'Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets' in learning about soft skills

### **Like Stress Management and Team Work.**

The lecturer explains chapters where the central character of the novel Harry manages stress and lives under the cruel treatment of his guardians. Likewise the lecturer explains the way team work is being depicted in the novel where Harry forms a good team with his friends, students and teachers in the school and fights against the evil force Lord Voldemort who has killed Harry's parents when he has been a baby. Finally, the lecturer discusses the soft skills learnt through the novel and their implications in the practical lives of the students.

### **Method: 2 (Vark Method)**

VARK learning styles theory describes how four distinct types of learners process information. Based upon the VAK (visual, auditory and kinesthetic) model of learning, VARK learning styles theory was created in

1987 by Neil Fleming. Fleming's previous model of the visual learning component was divided into two parts, a symbolic aspect (represented as V) and a text aspect (represented as R). According to the VARK learning styles theory, every individual is inclined to a favoured learning style, instinctively favouring one of the four styles of VARK theory. Some student's process information most effectively by using a visual learning style, just as others rely more heavily on either auditory style, read/write learning style or kinesthetic style of learning. While most students express a marked preference for a particular learning style, they are usually unable to process information even if it is presented in the format of a non-preferred style. In fact, few learners are exclusively committed to a single style of learning. Rather, many individuals recognize the benefits associated with multiple learning styles. For example, a student who expresses significant kinesthetic learning skills may also respond well to auditory learning opportunities.

The author takes up the VARK inventory test to identify the preferences and finds the scores. It is found out that all the four methods will help the students of diversified nature. So, all the four methods have been adopted to train the students in soft skills through the novel.

For this method, four different modes of teaching are adopted namely lecturing with power point presentation (auditory), novel reading (reading) and movie watching (video) and group discussions (kinesthetic). Students are supplied with notes about the description of soft skills and the script of the novel 'Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets'. Each lecturing lasts for 55 minutes. The following points are discussed in the class:

1. Video: Movie of the novel is broadcast in the language lab and each student is allowed to view the film and asked to note down soft skills exhibited by the characters
2. Auditory: Power point slides about stress management and team work are explained. The story of the novel and the soft skills involved in the characters of the novel are explained.
3. Reading: Students are asked to read the script of the novel to understand the soft skills in the novel.
4. Kinesthetic: Group discussion is conducted to discuss the importance of team work and stress management

### **VIII. EVALUATION**

A test is conducted to evaluate the level of understanding of the students. Questions are focused on two soft skills namely Stress Management and Team Work and on the characters which exhibited those skills. The questions are selected in such a way that it will cater to the needs of all the 4 categories of VARK learning style approach.

#### **Team Work Questions**

1. What is a team?-R
2. Is the team working essential in today's corporate sectors? Why?-A
3. Do you find team co-operation with the characters in the novel 'Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets'? Explain.-V
4. Mention any one situation in the novel where you find team work leading to success.-V
5. Is it necessary for college students to learn about teamwork? Why?-K
6. What is your opinion about team work before attending this class?-K
7. What is your response to team work after attending this class?-K
8. Do you think you can learn about soft skills through this style of teaching?-K
9. Do you think that students who have learnt to work in teams will shine in their career? Why?-R
10. Mention some situations where we need to work in teams in our day to day life.-R
11. Give some tips to manage the team members?-R
12. Do you think that Harry is able to manage his team? Explain how?-V
13. Name the characters of the novel.-R
14. Who is the central character in the novel?-R

#### **Stress Management Questions**

15. Is Harry happy at home?-V/R
16. Explain Harry's situation at home. V/R
17. Do you think that Harry is put under stress? How? V/R
18. What is stress?-R
19. What are the behavioural consequences of stress?-K
20. Mention some diseases caused due to stress?-K
21. Mention some situations where we become stressful in our day to day life. -K
22. Give some tips to manage the stressful situations.-R
23. Do you think that Harry is able to manage stress in that particular situation? Explain how?-V/A
24. Stress management is necessary for an employee? Why? K/R

25. Is it necessary for college students to learn how to manage stress? Why? K/A
26. Do you think that students who have learnt to manage their stress will shine in their career? Why?-K
27. Do you find any other character in the novel stressful apart from Harry?-V/R
28. Do you find any changes in you regarding stress management after this study? Explain-K
29. How far this way of teaching has helped you in learning about stress management?-K

## IX. RESULTS

The test is conducted and the marks are obtained and the method of teaching is analysed using frequency distribution analysis, median and mode. The frequency distribution scores for class A for 34 students who have been taught using 'Lecturing Method' of teaching are compared with the frequency distribution of scores of 50 students of 'class' B' who have been taught with VARK Method. Following are the results of the two methods of teaching namely 'Lecturing Method' and VARK Method followed by feedback and conclusion.

### Lecturing Method

A class of 45 students is selected for this method of teaching. 34 out of 45 students have completed the questionnaire. Students are asked to record their responses against the questions on soft skills namely Stress Management and Time Management and on the novel Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. Table-1 shows the frequencies of marks and number of students.

From the table, it can be seen that 3 students have scored between 30 and 40. 8 students have scored between 40 and 50. 9 students have scored between 50 and 60. 7 students have scored between 60 and 70. 9 students have scored between 70 and 80.

**Table-1**

Marks	No. of Students	Mid points of class interval ( $x_i$ )	$f_i x_i$	Cumulative freq $\sum f_i$
0-10	0	5	0	0
10-20	0	15	0	0
20-30	0	25	0	0
30-40	3	35	105	3
40-50	8	45	360	11
50-60	9	55	495	20
60-70	7	65	455	27
70-80	9	75	675	36
80-90	0	85	0	36
90-100	0	95	0	36
	42		2000	<b>Mean = 58.82</b>
				<b>Median = 57.5</b>
				<b>Mode = 46.25</b>

### Feedback on lecturing method:

Even though students are able to understand the soft skills with lecturing method which is the usual method of teaching in most of the colleges; many students have not given a satisfactory response for the questions. None of the students have scored beyond 80. Considering the requirement of more guidance and new methods, discussions are held with the placement team which shoulders the responsibility of planning a training programme for the students on soft skills. An induction programme was arranged to increase the awareness about soft skills and also to learn activities related to it. Students are encouraged to discuss their learning needs. The feedback from the students ranged between fair and good.

### VARK Method

Of the 52 students, 50 students have completed the questionnaire with excellent answers. Table-2 shows the frequencies of marks and number of students. From the table, it is clear that 9 students have scored between 60 and 70. 13 students have scored between 70 and 80, 12 students scored between 80 and 90. 17 students have scored between 90 and 100. The overall performance is better than the previous lecturing method. There is a more significant difference in the students' response in class B than in class A regarding the level of understanding of the concepts.

**Table-2**

Marks	No. of Students	Mid points of class interval ( $x_i$ )	$f_i x_i$	Cumulative freq $\sum f_i$
0-10	0	5	0	0
10-20	0	15	0	0
20-30	0	25	0	0
30-40	0	35	0	0
40-50	0	45	0	0
50-60	0	55	0	0
60-70	9	65	585	9
70-80	13	75	975	22
80-90	12	85	1020	34
90-100	17	95	1615	51
	51		4195	Mean = 82.25
				Median = 40
				Mode = 40

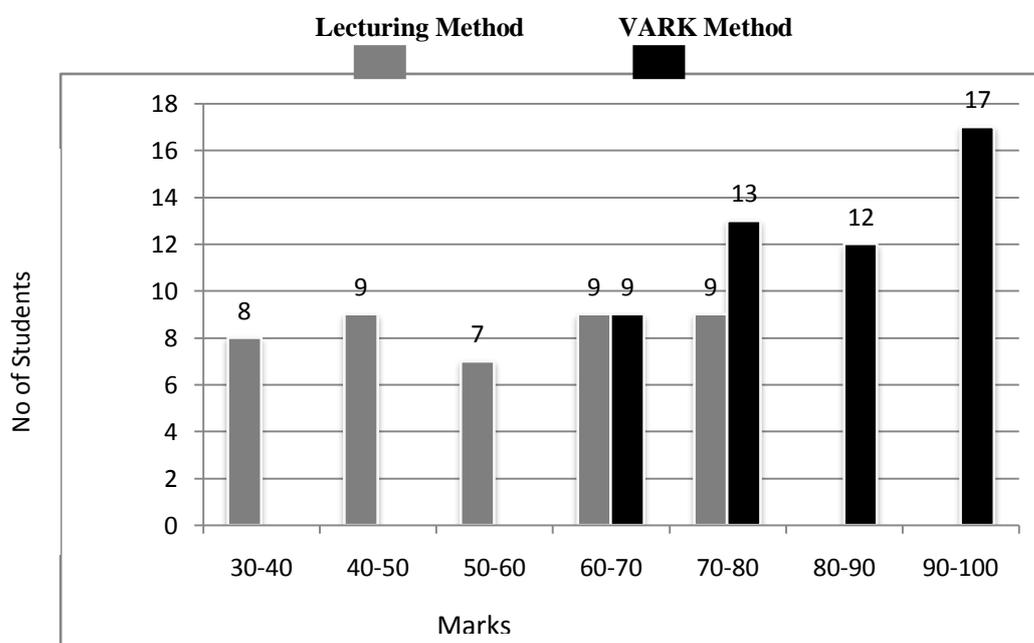
**Feed Back On VARK Method.**

The findings of this method are more promising and have led to greater student satisfaction. The feedback from the students is excellent. So VARK method is continued for other classes also. In addition, the soft skill guide book (prepared according to the needs of MNCs by the teachers) is supplied to the students to learn more about soft skills and their specific need in the workplace.

**Feedback from the Students**

1. Yes, watching movies and reading novel made us understand the concepts (time management and stress management) well.
2. This method of learning encourages me to lead a life without stress and also to work in a team.
3. This method of learning has helped me in my career development.
4. The video representation, reading and group discussions make us participate and learn with interest.
5. A wonderful part of teaching is giving examples of a practical situation. Through Harry, they explained how to manage stress and work with teams. We understood the concept through Powerpoint presentation and GD.

**Bar Chart Depicting Lecturing and VARK Method**



The bar chart explains the differences between Lecturing Method and VARK Method.

### X. PAIRED T-TEST

The paired t - test is a way to test by comparing two related samples, involving small values of n that does not require the variances of the two populations to be equal, but the assumption that the two populations are normal must continue to apply. This test is generally considered appropriate in a before –and- after-treatment study. T-test is conducted for LECTURING METHOD and VARK METHOD separately.

#### Paired T-Test for Lecturing Method

The score before the training is taken as X and the score after the training as Y and then the null hypothesis that the mean of difference is zero, we can write:

H<sub>0</sub>: μ<sub>1</sub>= μ<sub>2</sub> which is equivalent to test H<sub>0</sub> : $\bar{D}$ =0

H<sub>a</sub>: μ<sub>1</sub>< μ<sub>2</sub> (as we want to conclude that training has been effective)

Considering the prevalence of matched pairs, paired t-test is used to work out the test static t as under

$$t = (\bar{D} - 0)/(\sigma_{diff}/\sqrt{n})$$

To find the value of t, the mean and standard deviation of differences are worked out as shown below.

S.No	Mark Before training Xi	Marks after training Yi	Difference Di (Xi-Yi)	Difference Squared (Di) <sup>2</sup>
1	53	55	-2	4
2	50	46	4	16
3	42	40	2	4
4	41	43	-2	4
5	44	45	-1	1
6	30	35	-5	25
7	32	30	2	4
8	31	33	-2	4
9	40	42	-2	4
10	40	40	0	0
TOTAL			-6	66

$$t = (\bar{D} - 0)/(\sigma_{diff}/\sqrt{n})$$

$$\bar{D} = \frac{\sum Di}{n} = \frac{-6}{10} = -0.6$$

$$\sigma_{diff} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum Di^2 - (\bar{D})^2 \cdot n}{n - 1}} = \sqrt{66 - (-0.6) \cdot 10/9}$$

$$= \sqrt{\frac{66 - 3.6}{9}} = \sqrt{62.4/9}$$

$$= 2.63$$

$$t = \frac{(\bar{D} - 0)}{(\sigma_{diff}/\sqrt{n})} = \frac{-0.6 - 0}{\frac{2.63}{\sqrt{10}}} = -0.722$$

Degrees of freedom = n-1= 10-1=9

As H<sub>a</sub> is one sided, a one-tailed test ( in the left tail because H<sub>a</sub> is of less than type) is applied for determining the rejection region at 5 percent level and using the table of t- distribution for 9 degrees of freedom.

$$R: t < -1.833$$

The observed value of t is -0.722 which is in the acceptance region and thus, H<sub>0</sub> is accepted and is concluded that the difference in score before and after training soft skills through lecturing method is insignificant. Hence it is inferred that the lecturing method is not effective.

#### Paired T-Test for VARK Method

The score before the training is taken as X and the score after the training as Y and then the null hypothesis that the mean of difference is zero, we can write:

H<sub>0</sub>: μ<sub>1</sub>= μ<sub>2</sub> which is equivalent to test H<sub>0</sub> : $\bar{D}$ =0

H<sub>a</sub> : μ<sub>1</sub> μ<sub>2</sub> (as we want to conclude that training has been effective)

As we are having matched pairs, we use paired t-test and work out the test static t as under

$$t = (\bar{D} - 0)/(\sigma_{diff}/\sqrt{n})$$

To find the value of t, we shall first have to work out the mean and standard deviation of differences as shown below.

S.No	Mark Before Xi training	Marks after training Yi	Difference Di (Xi-Yi)	Difference Squared (Di) <sup>2</sup>
1	50	74	-24	576
2	47	72	-25	625
3	50	85	-35	1225
4	56	89	-33	1089
5	47	97	-50	2500
6	50	91	-41	1681
7	42	82	-40	1600
8	40	82	-42	1764
9	50	88	-38	1444
10	50	88	-38	1444
TOTAL			-366	13948

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{D} &= \frac{\sum Di}{n} = \frac{-366}{10} = -36.6 \\ \sigma_{diff} &= \sqrt{\frac{\sum Di^2 - (\bar{D})^2 \cdot n}{n-1}} = \sqrt{\frac{13948 - 1339.56 \cdot 10}{9}} \\ &= \sqrt{\frac{552.4}{9}} = \sqrt{61.3} \\ &= 7.83 \\ t &= (\bar{D} - 0)/(\sigma_{diff}/\sqrt{n}) \\ t &= \frac{-36.6 - 0}{\frac{7.83}{\sqrt{10}}} = \frac{-36.6}{2.47} = -14.817 \end{aligned}$$

Degrees of freedom = (n-1) = 10-1 = 9

As H<sub>a</sub> is one –sided, we shall apply a one-tailed test(in the left tail because H<sub>a</sub> is of less than type for determining the rejection region at 5 percent which comes to as under, using the table of t-distribution for 9 degrees of freedom.

$$R: t > -1.833$$

The observed value of t is 14.817 which is in the acceptance region and thus, we reject H<sub>0</sub> and accept H<sub>1</sub> and conclude that the difference in score before and after training is significant. Hence we can infer that the training soft skills through VARK method is effective.

## X. CONCLUSION

It can, of course, be ascertained that the soft skill which is the subject of this paper should be ingrained in the overall academic degree structure rather than taught in semi isolation. Generally, most of the colleges train their students in soft skills using outside agencies. However, some explicit teaching is needed to instill these in students in order to allow them to perform well in their workplace.

According to Kolb's model, the ideal learning process engages all four of these modes (Concrete Experience and Abstract Conceptualization, as well as two related approaches toward transforming experience: Reflective Observation and Active Experimentation) in response to situational demands. In order to make learning to be effective, all four of these approaches must be incorporated. As individuals attempt to use all four approaches, however, they tend to develop strengths in one experience-grasping approach and one experience-transforming approach. The resulting learning styles are combinations of the individual's preferred approaches. (David Kolb, 1984)

It appears that a simple intervention such as administering a learning style can enhance the students' learning. The VARK inventory method has helped the author to understand the students' mentality and on the whole this study has demonstrated that students have responded favourably to this method and the feedback is

excellent. The feedback suggests that the majority of the students have found this method more useful and helpful and also it has created interest in learning soft skills.

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