

An Examination of Life Skill Development by Louisiana 4-H Club Officers

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During a recent legislative impact audit of the Louisiana 4-H program, it was noted that there was very little data to document the impact 4-H programming has on the state's youth. Because of the nature of 4-H, informal or authentic assessments have been the cornerstones of evaluation, but innovative strategies were needed to strengthen the program's evaluation efforts. One area of concern was the life skill development of youth participants. Therefore, this study focused on the life skill development of 4-H Club/Group officers. The results show that 4-H Club/Groups Officers' life skills improved as a result of the training. This improvement was noted in most of the officers' life skills examined in the study. Previous service as a 4-H officer resulted in increased life skills for presidents, vice-presidents, and secretaries, but no change for other officers. Years of officer training had low to moderate positive relationships with most officers' life skills levels. Years of holding other 4-H offices had low or moderate positive relationships with most of the presidents' and vice-presidents' life skills levels but negligible relationships existed for the other officers.

Introduction

According to the National 4-H Council (2004), "4-H is a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills" (p. 2). Subsequently, one of the primary missions of 4-H is to develop certain life skills that hopefully increase the participants' chances for success in the future. Early experiences associated with youth programs can help mold a responsible, contributing citizen (Leffert, Saito, Blyth, & Kroenke, 1996). The 4-H participant has many opportunities to engage in programs allowing them to practice life skills that have the potential to follow the participant into adulthood (Ladewig & Thomas, 1987). One of the major opportunities a 4-Her has to practice life skill development is through the 4-H club officer program. Youth, starting in 4th grade, can vie for elected positions within the club setting. These positions include but are not limited to

offices such as president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and reporter/historian.

Need for the Study

As more emphasis is being placed on accountability throughout Cooperative Extension programming (Barkman & Machtmes, 2001), it was essential to examine the impact of the 4-H officer training program in Louisiana. Though many parishes conduct impact assessments of specific programming efforts, few statewide research efforts have addressed life skill development of Louisiana 4-H participants.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the study was to determine the impact that officer training programs have on the life skill development of 4-H club officers. The objectives were to:

1. Describe 4-H Club/Group officers on selected personal and demographic characteristics. The characteristics were: officer training participation, number of years participating in officer training, previous 4-H offices held, number of years served in 4-H office(s), other club/group offices held, and number of years served in other club/group office(s).
2. Determine if selected life skills associated with specific 4-H offices increased during the training period (school year).
3. Determine if differences existed in the 4-H officers' life skills by whether they had received training and by whether they had previously served in a 4-H office.
4. Determine if a relationship existed between selected program characteristics and officers' life skills.

Relevant Literature

National and state level studies have reported the magnitude of the impact 4-H has on youth. Several studies have found that participation in 4-H programs positively influenced life skill development (Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992; Fitzpatrick et al., 2005; Fox, Shroeder, & Lodl, 2003; Heinsohn & Cantrell, 1986; Perkins & Borden, 2003). A United States Department of Agriculture (2001) national study of youth and adults perceptions of the benefits of 4-H youth development programs found that 4-H participation made young people feel good about themselves, provided a safe environment for academic experimentation, enhanced problem solving and group interaction skills, positively impacted decisions to help others in their communities by participating in volunteerism, and developed a sense of empathy within the organization. Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, and Yee (2000) reported that young adults who volunteer are more likely to do well in school, graduate, vote, and be philanthropic.

Astroth and Haynes (2002) found that 4-H youth are more likely to report they succeed in schools, are more involved as leaders in their schools and communities, are looked up to as role models by other youth, and help others in their community. In addition, 4-H youth were less likely to report they steal, use illegal drugs, ride in a car with someone who has been drinking, smoke cigarettes, vandalize property, or skip school. Their study found 4-H youth feel more socially competent and self-assured than

other youth and are more likely to have a positive view of their community and the future.

Karr, Keith, and Lockaby (2001) found the majority of former members felt that serving on the Texas 4-H Council fostered the development of communication, leadership, and goal setting skills. Also, most members agreed participation contributed to their career success by teaching them skills such as public speaking that they use daily. Kleon and Rinehart (1998) study of Ohio teen 4-H leaders found a significant increase in mean scores associated with perceptions of life skill development after completion of the 4-H program.

Several studies have examined the impact of 4-H on youth in Louisiana. State 4-H Agents are aware that 4-H youth are more likely to report they succeed in schools, are more involved as leaders in their schools and communities, are admired as role models by other youth, and help others in their community (Spoto, 2001). Guidry (1988) found that 4-H members participated in other clubs and groups at a higher rate than non-members and that 4-H members won more awards in academic and extra-curricular activities. Guidry's findings supported a Texas study of 4-H participants (Ladewig & Thomas, 1987).

Sarver (1997) found that 4-H members defined a worthy youth organization as one promoting the fulfillment of adolescent development needs, and encouraged involvement from parents, promoted leadership, community service, enthusiasm, honesty, morality, dignity of work, mature adolescent relationships, economic security, family life, health, and independence from their parents. Further, Sarver found that participants highly agreed that Louisiana 4-H paralleled the same characteristics used to describe a worthy youth organization.

An examination of self-perceived abilities of participants of the Louisiana 4-H Challenge Camp showed that members felt the camp had a positive influence on perceived life skill development at the junior high school level (Fletcher, 1994). Griffin (1995) reported that 4-H Camp was seen as having a high degree of educational value. Almost 50% of 4-H educational programs were rated as having a high educational value.

Two studies addressed the reputation held by 4-H programs in the community. Exemplifying the reach of 4-H programs, over

90% of the respondents were aware of the 4-H program in their community (Cannizzaro, 1998). In another study of why volunteers chose to devote their efforts to 4-H, Boz and Verma (2001) reported they did so to altruistically promote the achievement of youth.

Method

Population and Sample

The population for the study consisted of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade 4-H club officers in Louisiana because it was believed these youth would have a reduced chance of serving as officers in other clubs and this factor had the potential of highlighting the impact of 4-H officer training programs. Twenty parishes were randomly selected to participate in the officer life skill study. These parishes submitted the names of the 4-H clubs/groups fitting the population frame. From this list, the members from five randomly selected 4-H clubs/groups from each parish were designated as participants in the study. Utilizing this procedure, a potential of 100 officers in the categories of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Reporter, and Committee Chair for service projects were identified as possible participants for the study. The response rates for the 4-H club offices were as follows: President = 78 (78%), Vice President = 79 (79%), Secretary = 80 (80%), Treasurer = 64 (64%), Reporter = 74 (74%), and Committee Chairman = 21 (21%). The percentages shown are based on a total possible number of 100 for each office. The total response (*N*) for this study was 396.

Instrumentation

The officer life skill rubric was developed by 4-H youth development professionals, 4-H regional coordinators, 4-H state evaluation and curriculum specialists, and Extension evaluation specialists. Life skill information from *Four Fold Youth Development* (Horton, Hutchinson, Barkman, Machtmes, & Myers, 1999) and *Iowa Targeting Life Skills Model* (Hendricks, 1998) was used as a basis to establish the rubric. Because a youth may demonstrate a wide variety of life skills while acting as a 4-H club officer, a panel of experts determined the essential life skills associated with each 4-H club office. The office and number of essential life skills that were potentially developed while serving in that office were: president – 4, vice president – 3,

secretary – 2, treasurer – 2, and committee chair – 2. Four levels of performance were assigned to each life skill observed. Level one, the lowest level of performance, corresponded with poor demonstration of the life skill and level four corresponded with excellent demonstration of the skills. Each rubric level described characteristics for the observer to look for during the officer performances. The rater then assessed the presentation of the officer and mean scores corresponding to levels one to four were assigned for each life skill.

To minimize the possibility of a biased score and to increase rater reliability, 4-H youth development professionals received the 4-H Club Officer Score Sheet Rationale for Evaluating Life Skill Development describing the purpose for the assessment and to fully disclose the procedures for using the rubric. The raters were trained on how to use the score sheet and to appropriately rate the life skill level obtained by the officers. 4-H officers were observed demonstrating the selected life skills associated with the office held and received a performance score on the 4-H Club Officer Score Sheet. Training materials based on the 4-H Club Officer Score Sheet were developed for each officer position and supplied to the 4-H youth development professionals in the 20 parishes participating in the study. This material defined the characteristics associated with each of the four levels of the rubric used to rate the officers during their presentations. A Life Skill Training Manual was developed using 4-H officer associated publications of the LSU AgCenter and other national 4-H officer materials. Internal consistency of the scales in the instrument was measured using Cronbach's alpha and the coefficients ranged from .70 to .80, which indicates all scales possessed exemplary or extensive reliability according to the standards recommended by Robinson, Shaver, and Wrightsman (1991).

Data Collection

The officers' demographic and personal data were collected at the beginning of the school/club year. The personal data collected included: whether the officer had attended officer training (one training per year), and if so, how many times; whether they had held a prior 4-H office, and if so, how many years; and whether they had held a prior office in another organization, and if so, how many years. The

4-H youth development professionals from the participating parishes completed the Officer Life Skill Score Sheet at the beginning and at the end of the 4-H Club year. The first observation was completed during October or November and the final observation was completed in April or May. The pre and post observational ratings utilizing the officer life skill rubric were completed for each officer by the same rater. The data were forwarded to the state 4-H office for analysis.

Data Analysis

The life skills were analyzed for each of the offices utilizing paired *t*-tests; paired *t*-tests were used to compare the rubric scores from the first observation to the scores from the last observation to determine if significant differences existed. Independent *t*-tests and correlations were computed to determine if there were differences in the final observation rating by selected demographic variables. Independent *t*-tests were conducted to determine if there was a difference in the first observation score by whether the 4-H officers attended officer training or by whether they had held other 4-H offices.

Table 1
4-H Officer Experience by Office Held

Officer	Officer Training	Previous 4-H Office Held		Previous Non-4-H Office Held	
		<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
President	Yes	52	67.5	27	35.5
	No	25	32.5	49	64.5
Vice-President	Yes	48	64.0	15	20.3
	No	27	36.0	59	79.7
Secretary	Yes	46	63.9	11	15.5
	No	26	36.1	60	84.5
Treasurer	Yes	38	62.3	9	15.0
	No	23	23.7	51	85.0
Reporter	Yes	40	57.1	9	13.0
	No	30	42.9	60	87.0
Committee Chair	Yes	13	59.1	5	22.7
	No	9	40.9	17	77.3
Totals	Yes	237	62.9	66	18.2
	No	140	37.1	296	81.8

Note. *N* = 396.

A breakdown by office shows that a higher percentage (67.5%) of presidents participated in officer training compared to the vice presidents

(64.0%), secretaries (63.9%), treasurers (62.3), committee chairs (59.1%), and reporters (57.1%). The 4-H club officers with the highest

Findings

Limitations

It should be noted the data analyses incorporated multiple *t*-tests and the authors acknowledge that inflated alpha levels may have occurred. The same rater observed their assigned youth throughout the state and all raters received uniform training regarding the rubric and score sheet. It is acknowledged that individual biases may have occurred. It is also acknowledged that the leadership abilities of the club leaders vary and may have had an impact on life skill development of individual officers.

Objective One

The first objective described the population in terms of participation in 4-H officer training programs at the parish level and of previous and/or current experience of holding offices in 4-H and/or other clubs. A majority of current 4-H officers received officer training (62.9%), had not held previous 4-H offices (81.8%), and had not held previous offices in other clubs/groups (95.1%) (see Table 1).

incidence of previously holding 4-H officers was president (35.5%) followed by committee chairs (22.7%), vice presidents (20.3%), secretaries (15.5%), treasurers (15.0%), and reporters (13.0%). Likewise, those holding the office of president reported the highest percentage (9.3%) for previously holding offices in clubs other than 4-H followed by secretaries (7%), committee chairs (4.5), vice presidents (4.1%), treasurers (3.3%), and reporters (0.0%). It should be noted that 25 (32.5%) of the presidents reported they had received no officer training. Almost two-thirds (64.5%, $n = 49$) of the presidents reported they had no prior 4-H office experience and 68 (90.7%) reported no experience of holding non-4-H offices.

Table 2 displays the mean number of years associated with the officers' prior experience regarding 4-H officer training, previous 4-H

offices held, and previous non-4-H offices held. As a group, the presidents had more experience with 4-H officer training ($M = .86$ years); however, the data show that the group still averaged less than a year of officer training. Treasurers had the least amount of training ($M = .57$), just over one-half year. In terms of previous 4-H offices held, presidents had more experience ($M = .45$ years) and the secretary group had the least experience in holding other 4-H offices ($M = .15$ years). The secretaries, however, reported more experience in holding offices in non-4-H settings ($M = .10$), whereas, reporters demonstrated no prior experience holding non-4-H offices. Only 3% of the presidents reported they had received three years of officer training. This is possible for 6th graders in that they could have received officer training in 4th, 5th, and 6th grade.

Table 2
Years Officer Experience in Officer Training, 4-H Offices, and Non 4-H Offices

	President		Vice-President				Treasurer		Reporter		Committee Chair	
	$n = 75$		$n = 74$		$n = 71$		$n = 60$		$n = 69$		$n = 21$	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Years in officer training	.86	.82	.70	.66	.62	.63	.57	.57	.61	.63	.60	.68
Years in 4-H offices	.45	.74	.21	.51	.14	.39	.18	.45	.17	.48	.32	.65
Years in non-4-H offices	.09	.33	.07	.34	.10	.38	.03	.18	.00	.00	.05	.21

Note. $N = 396$.

Over half (42, 59%) of the 4-H vice presidents reported they had received at least one year of officer training and most (60, 82%) had never held a previous 4-H office. Over two-thirds (71, 96%) had never held an office outside of 4-H. Over half of the secretaries (36, 55%) had received at least one year of officer training, most (66, 93%) had never held a previous 4-H office, and most (60, 87%) had never held an office outside of 4-H. Over half of the treasurers, (28, 53%) received at least one year of officer training, 51 (85%) had never held a previous 4-H office, and 58 (97%) had never held an office outside of 4-H. Thirty-five (54%) of the reporters received at least one year of officer training, 60 (87%) had never held a previous 4-H office, and none of the reporters had held offices outside of 4-H. Committee chairs reported that 10 (50%) received at least one year of officer training, 17 (77%) had never

held previous 4-H offices, and 21 (96%) had never held an office outside of 4-H.

Objective Two

The second objective was to determine if selected life skills were associated with specific 4-H offices increased during the officers' year in office. Four life skills were measured for the office of presidents, three life skills for the vice-presidents, and two life skills each for the secretaries, treasurers, reporters and committee chairs. A paired t -test was used to determine if differences existed between the first and last observations for each life skill. The data in Table 3 indicate that all life skills measured for all officers showed a significant increase from the first observation to the last observation. Using Cohen's (1988) effect size descriptors, all statistically significant differences found were large.

Table 3
Differences Between 4-H Club/Group Officers Pre- and Post-training Life Skills

Office Life Skill	Obs ^a	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>n</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	ES ^b
<i>Presidents</i>									
Club Management	1	1.75	.74						
	2	2.89	.89	-10.89	78	< .001	79	-1.39	Large
Parliamentary Procedure	1	1.77	.74						
	2	2.86	.83	-11.67	77	< .001	78	-1.39	Large
Planning & Organization	1	2.01	.97						
	2	3.12	.77	-9.86	77	< .001	78	-1.27	Large
Oral Presentation	1	1.95	.79						
	2	3.06	.81	-11.35	77	< .001	78	-1.39	Large
<i>Vice-Presidents</i>									
Oral Presentations	1	1.75	.70						
	2	2.76	.93	-9.55	79	< .001	80	-1.25	Large
Educational Programming	1	1.81	.88						
	2	2.62	1.00	-7.19	78	< .001	79	-0.86	Large
Organization	1	1.63	.74						
	2	2.59	.98	-9.84	78	< .001	79	-1.11	Large
<i>Secretaries</i>									
Oral Reporting	1	1.66	.69						
	2	2.88	.86	-11.41	79	< .001	80	-1.56	Large
Written Reporting	1	1.61	.83						
	2	2.83	1.00	-10.20	79	< .001	80	-1.33	Large
<i>Treasurers</i>									
Oral Reporting	1	1.69	.64						
	2	2.66	.96	-7.95	63	< .001	64	-1.89	Large
Written Reporting	1	1.78	.86						
	2	2.53	.98	-6.48	63	< .001	64	-0.81	Large
<i>Reporters</i>									
Oral Reporting	1	1.53	.74						
	2	2.54	1.08	-7.99	73	< .001	74	-1.09	Large
Club News	1	1.60	.85						
	2	2.60	1.17	-6.34	74	< .001	75	-0.98	Large
<i>Committee Chairs</i>									
Oral Reporting	1	1.76	.89						
	2	2.86	.85	-5.65	20	< .001	21	-1.26	Large
Service Learning	1	1.55	.83						
	2	2.60	.99	-4.70	19	< .001	20	-1.15	Large

Note. Obs = observation. A scoring rubric was utilized to measure each life skill.

^aObs = this column indicates the first or last observation. ^bES = Effect size interpretation. Effect sizes interpreted using Cohen's (1988) effect size descriptors: $d = .20$ or above: small effect size, $d = .50$ or above: moderate effect size, $d = .80$ or above: large effect size.

Objective Three

This objective used independent *t*-tests to compare the life skills scores of officers who attended officer training and for youth who were previous officers in 4-H with the officers who

did not participate in these activities. Committee chairs were not included in these analyses because there were not enough committee chair who participated in training to

conduct the *t*-tests (see Table 4).

Table 4
Differences in Life Skills Pre-Assessment by Whether 4-H Club/Group Officers Had Participated in Officer Training

Office	Life Skill	Participated	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>n</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	ES ^a
<i>Presidents</i>										
	Oral Presentation	Yes	2.06	.81	2.57	73	.012	51	.68	Medium
		No	1.58	.58						
	Club Management	Yes	1.86	.75	2.03	73	.046	51	.51	Medium
		No	1.50	.66						
	Parliamentary Procedure	Yes	1.94	.77	1.96	72	.054	50	.51	Medium
		No	1.58	.65						
	Planning & Organization	Yes	2.10	.81	1.33	72	.187	50	.44	Small
		No	1.79	.58						
<i>Vice-Presidents</i>										
	Organization	Yes	1.79	.72	3.32	71	.001	47	.87	Large
		No	1.27	.45						
	Oral Presentation	Yes	1.83	.72	2.57	72	.012	48	.66	Medium
		No	1.42	.50						
	Educational Programming	Yes	1.96	.83	1.93	71	.058	47	.48	Small
		No	1.58	.76						
<i>Secretaries</i>										
	Oral Presentation	Yes	1.71	.58	2.13	68	.037	45	.54	Moderate
		No	1.40	.57						
	Written Presentation	Yes	1.71	.82	1.42	68	.158	45	N/A	N/A
		No	1.44	.65						
<i>Treasurers</i>										
	Oral Presentation	Yes	1.79	.55	2.60	54	.012	33	.71	Moderate
		No	1.39	.58						
	Written Presentation	Yes	1.79	.74	0.02	54	.982	33	N/A	N/A
		No	1.78	.99						
<i>Reporters</i>										
	Oral Presentation	Yes	1.58	.68	1.54	63	.037	38	.40	Small
		No	1.33	.55						
	Club News	Yes	1.58	.72	.22	63	.827	38	N/A	N/A
		No	1.53	.88						

^aES = Effect size. Effect sizes interpreted using Cohen's (1988) descriptors.

The data show that the pre-assessment life skills of all officers were significantly higher for those who had participated in officer training for all officers and all life skills with three exceptions noted below. Medium effect sizes existed for the Presidents for oral presentation ($d = .68$), club management ($d=.51$), and parliamentary procedure life skills ($d=.51$), while a small effect size existed for planning and organization ($d=.44$). For the Vice-Presidents, a large effect size ($d=.87$) existed for organization, a medium effect size ($d=.66$) existed for oral

presentation, and a small effect size ($d=.48$) existed for educational programming. A moderate effect size existed for the secretaries and treasurers and a small effect size existed for the reporters for oral presentation. No gain was found for the secretaries and treasurers on written presentation and no gain was found for the reporters on club news.

The pre-assessment life skills of all officers were also significantly higher for presidents and vice-presidents who had previously held a 4-H office (see Table 5).

Table 5
Differences in Life Skills Pre-Assessment by Whether 4-H Club/Group Officers Had Previously Held a 4-H Office

Office Life Skill	Held Previous 4-H Office	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>n</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	ES ^a
<i>Presidents</i>									
Oral Presentation	Yes	2.22	.75				27		
	No	1.68	.66	3.22	72	.002	47	.76	Medium
Club Management	Yes	1.96	.71				27		
	No	1.57	.65	2.40	72	.019	47	.57	Medium
Parliamentary Procedure	Yes	2.00	.78				27		
	No	1.67	.63	1.94	71	.056	46	.47	Small
Planning and Organization	Yes	2.18	.88				27		
	No	1.85	.92	1.54	71	.128	46	.37	Small
<i>Vice-Presidents</i>									
Oral Presentation	Yes	2.00	.68				14		
	No	1.58	.59	2.34	71	.022	59	.66	Medium
Organization	Yes	1.92	.64				13		
	No	1.49	.60	2.33	72	.023	59	.69	Medium
Educational Programming	Yes	2.00	1.00				13		
	No	1.75	.73	1.06	71	.294	59	.29	Small
<i>Secretaries</i>									
Oral Presentation	Yes	1.90	.58				10		
	No	1.55	.57	1.68	67	.097	59	N/A	N/A
Written Presentation	Yes	1.90	1.10				10		
	No	1.55	.70	1.29	67	.199	59	N/A	N/A
<i>Treasurers</i>									
Oral Presentation	Yes	1.86	.69				07		
	No	1.59	.57	1.17	54	.269	49	N/A	N/A
Written Presentation	Yes	2.00	1.00				07		
	No	1.76	.83	.713	54	.479	49	N/A	N/A
<i>Reporters</i>									
Oral Presentation	Yes	1.77	.97				09		
	No	1.44	.57	1.49	62	.141	55	N/A	N/A
Club News	Yes	1.33	.71				09		
	No	1.61	.80	-.96	63	.338	56	N/A	N/A

^aES = Effect Size. Effect Sizes interpreted using Cohen's (1988) descriptors.

No differences existed for secretaries, treasurers, and reporters who had previously held a 4-H office. The data in Table 5 show that medium effect sizes existed for the Presidents for oral presentation ($d = .76$) and club management ($d = .57$), while small effect sizes existed for parliamentary procedure ($d = .47$) and planning and organization ($d = .37$). For the Vice-Presidents, medium effect sizes existed for oral presentation ($d = .66$) and organization ($d = .69$), while a small effect size ($d = .29$) existed for educational programming. In all cases, the life skill increased as years of officer training increased.

Objective Four

This objective determined if a relationship existed between the officers' life skills levels and their years of officer training and years of holding previous 4-H offices. The data in Table 6 show that as years of officer training increased, the life skills of all of the officers' increased with the exception of the presidents' planning and organization skill, the vice-presidents' educational programming skill, and the treasurers' and reporters' written report skill. Also, as the years of holding other 4-H offices increased, some of the officers' life skills increased, namely, the presidents' club

management and oral presentation skills, the vice-presidents' oral presentation and organization skills. None of the life skills for the secretaries, treasurers or reporters changed as a result of the number of years the officers' held

other 4-H offices. It is important to note the effect sizes shown in the interpretation column in Table 6 since some of the relationships represented small effect sizes.

Table 6
Relationships Between 4-H Club/Group Officers' Life Skills Years of Officer Training and Holding Other 4-H Offices

Officer	Life Skill	<i>n</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	Interpretation
<i>Presidents</i>					
	Club Management				
	Years of officer training	68	.290	.007	Low
	Years of holding other 4-H offices	73	.250	.019	Low
	Parliamentary Procedure				
	Years of officer training	67	.308	.005	Moderate
	Years of holding other 4-H offices	72	.161	.140	Negligible
	Planning and Organization				
	Years of officer training	67	.186	.086	Negligible
	Years of holding other 4-H offices	72	.142	.186	Negligible
	Oral Presentation				
	Years of officer training	68	.442	< .001	Moderate
	Years of holding other 4-H offices	73	.311	.004	Moderate
<i>Vice-Presidents</i>					
	Oral Presentation				
	Years of officer training	69	.360	.001	Moderate
	Years of holding other 4-H offices	72	.267	.019	Low
	Educational Programming				
	Years of officer training	68	.204	.069	Negligible
	Years of holding other 4-H offices	71	.115	.303	Negligible
	Organization				
	Years of officer training	68	.355	.002	Moderate
	Years of holding other 4-H offices	71	.274	.017	Low
<i>Secretaries</i>					
	Oral Report				
	Years of officer training	64	.335	.005	Moderate
	Years of holding other 4-H offices	67	.156	.193	Negligible
	Written Report				
	Years of officer training	64	.285	.015	Low
	Years of holding other 4-H offices	67	.070	.552	Negligible
<i>Treasurers</i>					
	Oral Report				
	Years of officer training	50	.442	.002	Moderate
	Years of holding other 4-H offices	56	.135	.301	Negligible
	Written Report				
	Years of officer training	50	.181	.176	Negligible
	Years of holding other 4-H offices	56	.088	.489	Negligible
<i>Reporters</i>					
	Oral Report				
	Years of officer training	61	.255	.037	Low
	Years of holding other 4-H offices	64	.131	.282	Negligible
	Written Report				
	Years of officer training	62	.101	.394	Negligible
	Years of holding other 4-H offices	65	-.121	.304	Negligible

Note. Interpretations of effect size based on Davis's (1971) descriptors: .01-.09 (negligible), .10-.29 (low), .30-.49 (moderate), .50-.69 (substantial), .70-.99 (very high). The correlations for non-significant correlations were determined to have negligible effect size.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

A majority of 4-H officers received at least one officer training. Supporting the notion that the younger officers would have a lesser chance of holding offices in other youth organization, thus decreasing possible outside influences, the majority had not held previous 4-H offices or offices in other clubs/groups. As a group, the 4-H officers had less than one year of former experience as an officer. This data also supports the researchers' initial design to target a population with limited officer experience.

All of the life skills measured increased from the first observation to the second observation for the 4-H officers. Harder (2006) concluded that 4-H places more emphasis on oral communication than written communication. However, this study revealed increases in both oral and written communication associated with club officers. Although not all of the officers had participated in some type of officer training or had experience as an officer, the life skills required to perform their job as a 4-H officer increased when measured as an entire group. However, those presidents and vice-presidents that attended officer training prior to this project scored higher when observed in the first observation on the seven life skills measured. Additionally, presidents and vice-presidents that held previous offices in 4-H scored higher on all seven life skills measured as compared to those who did not previously hold 4-H offices, although no differences were found for the other officers. Therefore, it can be concluded the life skills associated with the 4-H Offices increased because of the training received, although the increases were stronger and applied to all officers during the training period covered by this study, while past training only positively impacted the presidents and vice-presidents. A vast majority of the officers reported they had never held offices outside of 4-H. It is apparent that 4-H offers 4th–6th graders a unique opportunity to become involved in a club, to pursue an office in that club, and to improve their life skills.

Years of officer training and years of holding other 4-H offices are positively related to the life skills of the officers. Positive relationships existed for the presidents between years of officer training and club management,

parliamentary procedure, and oral presentation; there were also positive relationships for the presidents between years of holding other 4-H offices and club management and oral presentation. For the vice-presidents, positive relationships existed between years of officer training and oral presentation and organization and between years of holding other 4-H offices and oral presentation and organization. Positive relationships existed for the secretaries between years of officer training oral report and written report and for the treasurers between years of officer training and oral report. The club reporters displayed positive relationships between years of officer training and oral report. It should be noted that the relationships were not identical for each officer or life skill with the exception of oral presentation, for which a significant and practical relationship existed for all officers.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend that all 4-H officers receive some type of officer training prior to officially serving as a 4-H officer. Officers who received training performed at a higher level than those who did not receive training. Parish and state 4-H leaders should emphasize the importance of this training to all officers and work to ensure that all officers participate.

The researchers recommend that agents or volunteers continue to analyze the effectiveness of officer training relative to the performance of those officers on selected life skills. Training that does not produce improved life skills between those officers receiving training and those not receiving training, should be examined to determine if training or curriculum currently utilized is effective. Appropriate changes in curriculum or training techniques should be explored to increase the effectiveness of officers when life skill development is a targeted area of impact.

It is recommended that some type of scoring scale be developed and tested to determine the impact that the volunteer 4-H club leader has on the development of life skills for the officers they work with. This variable was not measured and may have an influence on 4-H officer performance.

The researchers recommend that agents or volunteers using a rubric to chart life skill growth of officers allow for time to meet with

the individual officers to discuss areas of concern or areas of strength regarding their performance. Similar research is needed for older 4-H officers; however, limitations such as holding offices in other groups and prior experiences in 4-H may be difficult to control. The 4-H staff should continue to stress the importance of the opportunity to serve as an officer in the club setting, as this offers an avenue for positive life skill development. Inclusion of more youth in leadership roles in the 4-H club setting would provide more youth an opportunity for life skill development. It is recommended that 4-H agents and volunteers develop a system to reach more youth in a

leadership role by utilizing committees and sub-committees in the operation of the 4-H club.

This study should be replicated so that 4-H life skills development can be evaluated on a longitudinal basis. Smith, Genry, and Ketring, (2005) argued that a follow-up analysis would add strength to claims of life skill development. Therefore, a pre-test/post-test/follow-up format may enhance the results of subsequent research. This was an exploratory study that can hopefully serve as a model for other life skill development research. As the body of research expands regarding life skill development, so too will the effectiveness of youth programming.

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