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The Status of Life Skill Education in Secondary Schools – An Evaluative Study

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Abstract

Life skill education plays a key role in promoting psychological well-being and quality of a satisfying life for students such that they can lead effective life. Adolescents are expected to cope with various crucial social situations. Life skills education refers to the fundamental abilities that help adolescents to develop the skills they will need to deal with the realities of life. Life skills help to learn new things, develop control over their behavior, and make educated decisions. Children can learn not only how to respond appropriately to their health and well-being, but also how to build a thorough understanding of the biological, psychological, and social factors that influence their development through life skills education. The study aims to assess the status of life skill education among adolescents and to identify which life skills are the most necessary to overcome the educational delays. The study was conducted among various higher secondary school students in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh. The data was collected using pretested questionnaire and analyzed using t-test, one-way ANOVA, and Chi-square test. The mean age of the study population was 16.46 ± 1.04 , with a minimum age of 14 and a maximum of 18. More than half of the adolescents have a medium level of life skills (52%). 25.7% have a high level of life skills and 22% have a low level of life skills. Life skill education enables the students to make knowledgeable and reasonable decisions about their life. It enhances a person's ability to meet social goals and demands while assisting them in dealing with a variety of scenarios. Instilling training through life skill education will help adolescents in overcoming challenges in life.

KEYWORDS: Life skill education, adolescents, stress, challenges

INTRODUCTION

Life skills include psychosocial qualities and communication skills that help people to make smart decisions, resolve issues, analyze critically and creatively, interact efficiently, maintain social relationships, interact with others, and adjust to creatively regulating their lives. A wide range of talents is included in the idea of life skills, which is frequently employed in domains such as education, health, and social policies. One of the most effective components for maintaining adaptability among adolescents is life skill education. According to WHO, life Skills education contributes to the enhancement of emotional and professional development, the prevention of health and social issues, and the preservation of human rights by facilitating the practice and reinforcement of psychosocial skills in a culturally and

developmentally appropriate manner (1). To develop harmony and promote issues of concern, adolescents require both social and cognitive skills.

Adolescence is the most basic phase in the life of a person. It is the transition from childhood to adulthood that portrays the physiological, cognitive, emotional, and social changes. Inbuilt prohibitions exist in the general public in the form of instruction and support from close friends and family members, which help adolescents to develop. Globalization and the intrusion of technology into day-to-day affairs have significantly changed the lifestyles of people. Today's hyper-focused, competitive environment, along with a lack of traditional standards and support, has raised stress among adolescents, leading to depression, strain, loneliness, rejection, humiliation, rage, interpersonal connection difficulties, and failure (2). Interpersonal relationships are crucial in shaping one's personality and adjusting to one's social context. The relationship with parents, instructors, classmates, and friends assists adolescents because they help them develop a healthy self-personality (3). Reneging behaviour has been connected to shattered families and unstable family ties (4). Traditional associations such as family, and other social frameworks appear to be failing to develop such skills in children and adolescents. Media, social and moral circumstances, societal modifications, interests, and values among children and their families have all played a role in the development of these abilities. As a result, in addition to reading, writing, and counting, it is essential to give opportunities for children and adolescents to acquire life skills. Today, the importance of mental well-being is being emphasized all over the world, and extensive study has been conducted in this area. As a result, its significance and role in society become more evident to everyone.

The fast-paced lifestyle has failed to provide basic life skills to society. In this changing world, society must provide a better environment for the development of certain non-scholarly goals. Adolescent life skills are in a state of dissatisfaction at this phase (5). Adolescents are unable to comprehend their emotional sufferings, and as a result, they are unable to cope effectively with emotional distress, disputes, failure, and future worries, all of which are frequently the driving factor behind high-risk behaviors (6). The disruptive attitude among adolescents is associated with certain factors like drug misuse, disrupted family relationships, peer pressure, lack of competency, failure to cope with schoolwork (7). Life skills training has an impact on scholastic anxiety, adaptability, and self-esteem in teenagers and is found to be significantly improved in all these areas (8). Also, life skills training influences drug addiction prevention, and that it is very beneficial in reducing drug usage (9). Life skills have their roots in the Vedic Education system, which aimed to improve people's physical, ethical, and intellectual capacities. It was not just theoretical; it was based on real-life experiences. Students employ listening, reasoning, reflection, and meditation to understand a variety of life issues. The most important factor that will enable adolescents to live excellent and prosperous lives is life skill education. Self-awareness entails being aware of oneself and feeling good about and content with oneself. Autonomous societies have a critical responsibility to educate all of their members with basic life skill education so that they can live productive lives. With its basic educational practices, the state; by its social features, life skill education tries to enable its members to be liberated, keep their identity, and acquire the basic skills required to live together. Life skill education strives to promote physical and mental health by improving physiological, mental, and social well-being. (10), (11), (12), (13). Adolescents are expected to deal with a variety of challenging social settings. It

is necessary to have some life skills collection to successfully manage a social life. Life skills awareness is essential to deal with certain realities of life. Adolescents with life skills develop certain basic abilities to succeed in their circumstances and environment (14). Life skills can be defined in a variety of ways. Depending on culture and context, the definition and nature of life skills may vary. According to World Health Organization, there are ten fundamental life Skills. Self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, the ability of problem-solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationship, coping with stress, and coping with emotions are among them (15). Even though they are independent, these categories are interrelated and overlap.

The current educational system is in some ways unbalanced. It focuses heavily on information acquisition at the expense of skills, attitudes, and traits. We require an intellectual method of education to live a sophisticated manner of life in a cultured society. Knowledge has no value unless it is put to good use. We now rely more on life skills than on information recognition, among other things. Life skills are abilities, strengths, and qualities that help people deal with challenges in their daily lives positively and do their daily activities productively (16). A life skill is any skill that is useful in our daily lives. Adolescent life skills education programs should address challenges such as the prevention of drug abuse and early pregnancy, as well as the promotion of mental well-being before negative behavioral patterns and associations take hold. Life skills are important for activities that require participants to engage in both mental and physical activity. A key step for utilizing the potential of an adolescent is to develop the skills conscientiously for enhancing and strengthening life. When we consider life skills as human resources, we think of how they help people in achieving their goals and improving their lives. Subjective – information, knowledge, and reasoning, psychomotor – strong movement related with mental processes and the ability to execute manual labor, or affective – emotions and feelings – are all life skills that adolescents may require. Adolescents obtain certain basic talents such as quality assurance, attitudes, goal orientation, decision making, problem-solving, execution, evaluation, and communication. Adolescents can thus come to terms with themselves and learn to deal with difficulties (17).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the life skill education of adolescent students in various higher secondary schools located in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh.
2. To study the difference in life skill education between male and female adolescents of secondary school.
3. To study the difference in life skill education between rural and urban adolescents of secondary school.
4. To study the difference in life skills education between adolescents in a nuclear and joint family of secondary school.
5. To determine the association between life skill education and academic achievement.
6. To find out the association between life skill education and sociodemographic characteristics.

HYPOTHESIS

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in life skill education between male and female adolescents of secondary school.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in life skill education between urban and rural adolescents of secondary school.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in life skill education between adolescents in a nuclear and joint family of secondary school.

H₀₄: There is no association between life skill education and academic achievement.

H₀₅: There is no association between life skill education and sociodemographic factors.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

The study assesses the status of life skills education among secondary school students. This descriptive study consists of 300 school adolescents who are in various higher secondary school students located in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh. The students between the age of 15 and 18 who were willing to participate were included in the study. The questionnaire used for the study was divided into two sections. The first part consisted of the sociodemographic detail of the individuals including name, age, gender, class, occupation of father and mother, family type, residential area, socioeconomic status, and the scholastic performance which is the percentage of marks of their previous examinations. According to the marks, the academic performance of the students was categorized as high, medium, and low. The second part of the study included a 50-item life skill education scale questionnaire that was divided into ten core domains; self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, problem-solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationship, coping with stress, and coping with emotion. Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) are the five marking strategies for each of the statements. Every statement received a score of 5,4,3,2, and 1 accordingly. The questionnaire contains 50 items, all of which are positive. A minimum score of 5 and a maximum score of 25 are assigned to each dimension. Similarly, the minimum and maximum scores for overall dimensions are 50 and 250, respectively, with an average score of 150. The data were entered into Microsoft Excel and analyzed with SPSS Version 24.0 statistical package. The Sociodemographic information, life skill scores of the participants were analyzed. To deal with categorical data, frequencies and percentages were used and for continuous data, mean and standard deviation were used. The statistical test used for the analysis was the Chi-square test, t-test, and One way ANOVA.

RESULTS

Out of 300 students, 123 (41%) were females and 177 (59%) were males. The mean age of the study population was 16.46 ± 1.04 , with a minimum age of 14 and a maximum of 18. The majority of them (68.7%) belong to nuclear family and 31.3% belong to joint families. A total of 116 (38.7%) are from the Upper middle-class family (Table 1)

Table 1: Frequency table for Sociodemographic factors

Sociodemographic factors		Frequency	Percent
Age	14 yrs	1	0.3
	15 yrs	66	22.0
	16 yrs	85	28.3
	17 yrs	90	30.0
	18 yrs	58	19.3
	Total	300	100.0
Gender	Male	177	59.0
	Female	123	41.0
	Total	300	100.0
Father's Occupation	Agriculture	62	20.7
	Business	149	49.7
	Other	42	14.0
	Service	47	15.7
	Total	300	100.0
Mother's Occupation	Agriculture	25	8.3
	Business	41	13.7
	House Wife	166	55.3
	Other	6	2.0
	Service	62	20.7
	Total	300	100.0
Family Type	Nuclear Family	206	68.7
	Joint Family	94	31.3
	Total	300	100.0
Residential Area	Urban	148	49.3
	Rural	152	50.7
	Total	300	100.0
Socio-economic Status	Lower	38	12.7
	Lower Middle	76	25.3
	Upper Middle	116	38.7
	Upper	70	23.3
	Total	300	100.0
Academic Achievement	60% - 69%	46	15.3
	70% - 79%	89	29.7
	80% - 89%	91	30.3
	90% & Above	60	20.0
	Below 60%	14	4.7
	Total	300	100.0

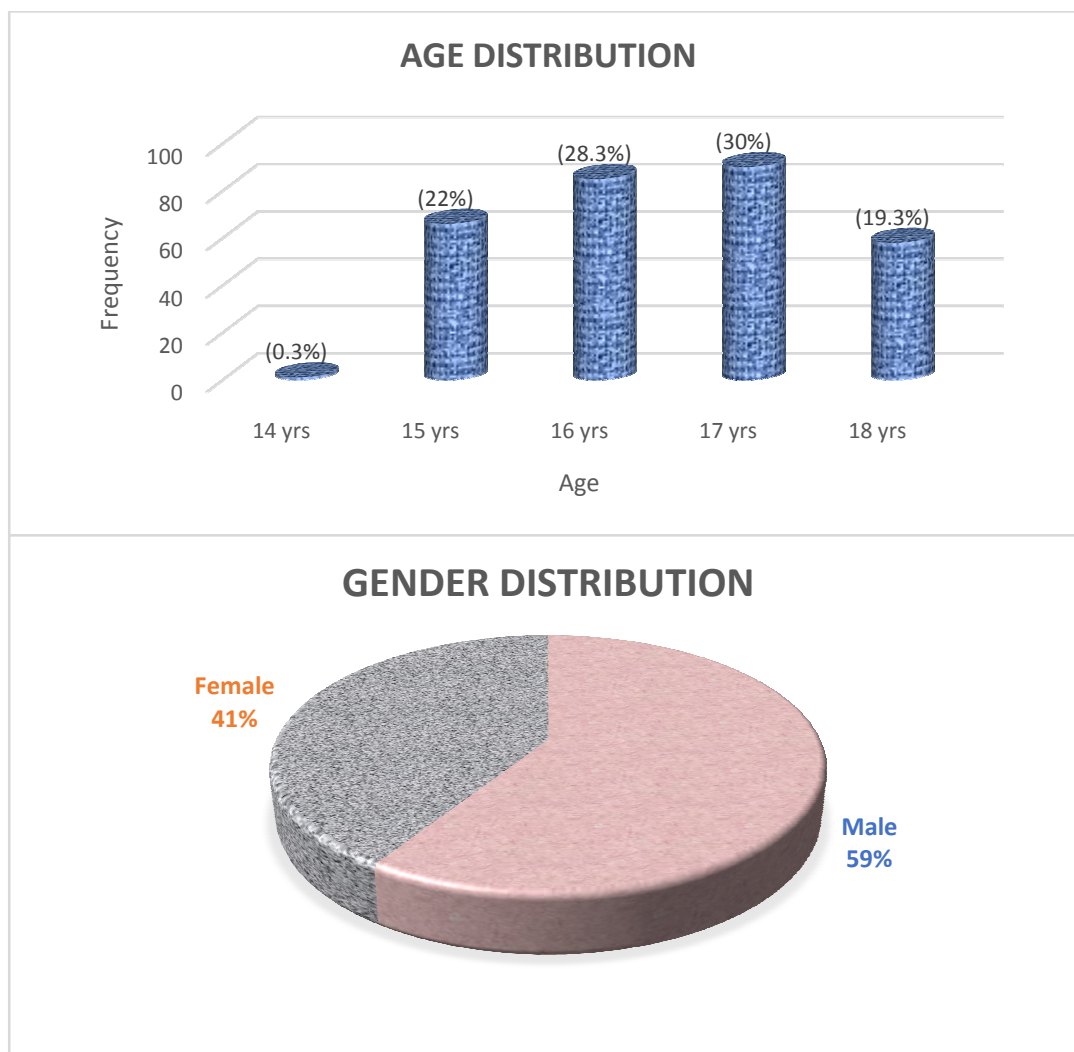


Figure 1: Age Distribution

Figure 2: Gender distribution

Most of the students have a medium level of life skills (52%). 25.7% have a high level of life skills and 22% have a low level of life skills. (Table 2 & Figure 2)

Table 2: Frequency table for Life skill education

Life skill education	Frequency	Percent
High	77	25.7
Medium	156	52.0
Low	67	22.3
Total	300	100.0
Mean \pm SD	173.51 \pm 10.50	

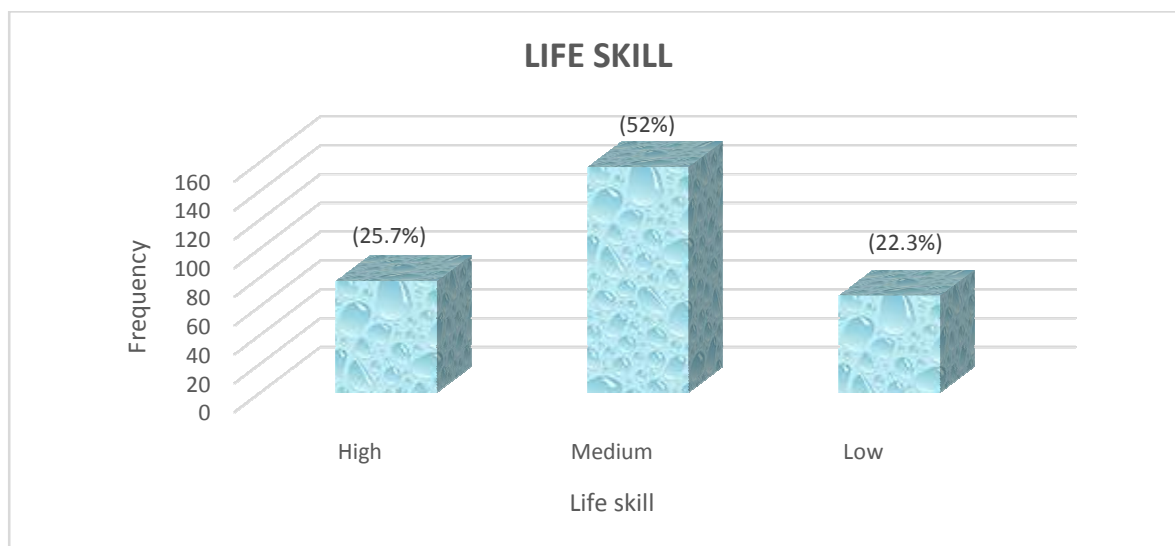


Figure 3: Life Skill education

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for the ten cores of life skill education. Among them, the highest mean value is for coping with stress (18.54) with a standard deviation of 2.55 and the lowest is for coping with emotion (11.07) with a standard deviation of 2.35.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for cores of life skill education

Life skills	Mean \pm SD	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Self-Awareness	17.94 \pm 2.58	18	10	24
Empathy	17.66 \pm 3.04	18	8	24
Effective Communication	18.01 \pm 2.91	18	8	25
Interpersonal relationship	18.08 \pm 3.06	18	8	25
Creative thinking	18.00 \pm 3.01	18	8	25
Critical thinking	17.85 \pm 3.13	18	7	25
Decision making	18.25 \pm 2.77	18	10	25
Problem-solving	18.08 \pm 2.77	18	9	25
Coping with emotion	11.07 \pm 2.35	11	4	15
Coping with stress	18.54 \pm 2.55	18	9	25

The mean of life skills among males (173.22) is less compared to that of female (173.92) students. The comparison of life skill education between male and female students (Table 4) was done using a t-test. Here, the p-value is less than 0.05, so there is a significant difference in life skill education between male and female students.

Table 4: Comparison of life skill education between male and female students

Gender	Mean \pm SD	Median	Minimum	Maximum	t statistic	p-value
Male	173.22 \pm 10.86	172.00	145	212	0.572	0.005
Female	173.92 \pm 10.00	173.00	151	207		

The mean of life skills among students in a nuclear family (173.81) is greater than the joint family (172.85). The comparison of life skill education between students in a nuclear and joint family (Table 5) was done using t-test. Here, the p-value is greater than 0.05, so there is no significant difference in life skill education between the nuclear and joint families of students.

Table 5: Comparison of life skill education between the nuclear and joint family of students

Family Type	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	t statistic	p-value
Nuclear Family	173.81 \pm 11.03	173.00	145	212	0.733	0.464
Joint Family	172.85 \pm 9.27	172.00	154	192		

The mean of life skills among students in the urban area (173.81) is greater than in the rural area (173.21). The comparison of life skill education between rural and urban students (Table 6) was done using t-test. Here, the p-value is greater than 0.05, so there is no significant difference in life skill education between rural and urban students.

Table 6: Comparison of life skill education between rural and urban students

Residential Area	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	t statistic	p-value
Urban	173.81 \pm 10.73	172.00	152	212	0.5	0.641
Rural	173.21 \pm 10.30	172.50	145	199		

The comparison of life skill education and academic performance of students (Table 7) was done using one-way ANOVA. Here, the p-value is greater than 0.05, so there is no significant difference between life skill education and the academic performance of students.

Table 7: Comparison of life skill education and academic performance of students

Academic Achievement	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	124.927	2	62.464	0.564	0.570
Within Groups	32894.043	297	110.754		
Total	33018.970	299			

Table 8 shows the association of age, occupation of father, occupation of mother, and socio-economic status with life skill education using the Chi-square test. There

was no association between life skill education and these socio demographic factors since the p-value is greater than 0.05.

Table 8: Association between Life skill education and sociodemographic factors

Sociodemographic variables		Life skill			Total	χ^2 value	P-value
		High	Medium	Low			
Age	14	0	1	0	1	5.009	0.757
	15	15	37	14	66		
	16	24	45	16	85		
	17	25	40	25	90		
	18	13	33	12	58		
Father's Occupation	Agriculture	14	34	14	62	2.38	0.882
	Business	41	78	30	149		
	Other	11	22	9	42		
	Service	11	22	14	47		
Mother's Occupation	Agriculture	8	13	4	25	11.87	0.157
	Business	16	21	4	41		
	House Wife	33	88	45	166		
	Other	2	2	2	6		
	Service	18	32	12	62		
Socio Economic Status	Lower	10	20	8	38	1.62	0.951
	Lower Middle	17	44	15	76		
	Upper Middle	31	58	27	116		
	Upper	19	34	17	70		

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to assess the status of life skills education among secondary school students. More than half of the students have a medium level of life skills (52%). The study shows that there is a significant difference in life skill education between male and female students. These findings are consistent with studies done by Mousami et al (18). This study examined the effect of life skills training. They discovered a relationship between life skills training and positive wellbeing in adolescents and found out that there is a difference between males and females while using life skills. In addition, the study reveals that there are socioeconomic inequalities, such as the influence of life skills training in early adolescence on the upper-middle-class versus the lower middle class. This finding of the present study is supported by the study of Agric (19). The majority of adolescent girls exhibited a medium level of creative thinking (55%) and empathy, according to the pre-test (76.7%). Around 77.5%

showed improved critical thinking, stress management (70.9%), and problem-solving skills (65.8%). Except for creative thinking, none of them were deemed low-level (9.2%). Following an intervention, the majority of adolescent females had a high degree of critical thinking (94.16%), followed by stress-coping (79.12%), problem-solving abilities (70%), creative thinking (50%), and empathy (57.5%). According to the findings, adolescent females' pre-test and post-test scores in problem-solving, stress management, and empathy differ significantly. Furthermore, according to mean scores, post-test life skill development was much better than pre-test. Also, Gulhane conducted a study on life skill education to increase children's mental well-being and competency while they face life's obstacles. According to the study, life skill education provided through school educational programs plays a major role to function effectively as a social being by encouraging adolescents to take steps towards meaningful social relationships, protect themselves, and promote health (20). Also, the study done by Hilita & Kumar indicates that boosting emotional well-being and lowering emotional distress among teenagers are correlated to life Skills training. It was also discovered that it was far more prevalent in girls than in boys. In terms of the influence between group and gender, positive and negative feelings exhibit a variety of trends. There is no major communication impact between gender and group and is not significant for positive emotions and is significant for negative emotions (21). According to Ramesh and Farshad C., life skills training improves emotional wellbeing, pro-social behaviour, and the reduction of cognitive, psychosocial, and self-destructive behaviours (22).

In the study, the results show that there is no significant variance in life skills based on the residential area. Kaur has the same finding in her research study that there are no variations in the life skills of student teachers based on gender or location (23). Similar results were also reported in another study by Sandhu that there is no variation in the mean scores of life skills based on location (24).

The present study also reveals that there is no association between life skills and sociodemographic variables. This finding is consistent with the evidence of Anuradha that in her study there was no association between socio-demographic variables and life skills of students (25). Given the preceding discussion, it is acceptable to think that life skill education is beneficial for the development of students. The findings of the present study are consistent with those of Botvin, et al., Iqbal N, Nair. M.K.C and Yadav P, who all have demonstrated that the life skill education program is an upstanding supportive system for teenagers (26), (27), (28). According to Roeser & Peck, awareness education with attentive instruction can improve children's lives. New educational program development and extensive logical study are necessary to assess the quality of the program (29). Sharon et al. suggest that to enable good program delivery, schools must realize the need for training and specialized assistance (30).

CONCLUSION

Acquiring life skill education is essential for developing emotional well-being and satisfying life for each student. It is reasonably easy to instil values and influence at this developmental phase to encourage responsible and safe behaviour in the future. Moreover half of the students in this study have a medium level of life skills, whereas only a few have a low level of life skills. Life skills education would help us grow and progress while also allowing us to live as effectively and efficiently as possible. According to the findings, there is a considerable disparity in life skill education

between secondary school boys and girls. Furthermore, no differences in life skills education were discovered between rural and urban children. The practice of skills should be included in life skills education for significant well-being and societal concerns. Life skills lessons should be combined with health knowledge, and they can also be combined with other approaches. In terms of approaches, it is suggested that life skills be based on personal experiences and interactions. The teaching and learning process of life skills workshops should be dynamic. Brainstorming, role-playing, games, and discussions are some of the strategies that could be used. Only an effective educational administration process can result in the development of life skills.

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