

Assessment of life-skills of adolescents in relation to selected variables

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Abstract- Life-skills can be best understood as the abilities for positive and adaptive behaviour, which enable individuals to deal effectively with day to day needs and challenges. Major life skills include problem solving, decision making, creative and critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal skills, empathy, and self-awareness, coping with stress and emotions. These Life-skills have further been clustered as; Thinking skills, Social skills, and Emotional skills. Adolescence is the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from ages 10 to 19. It represents one of the critical transitions in the life span and is marked by a tremendous pace of physical and psychological human development. Recognizing the importance of life-skills, in the lives of Adolescents the present research was undertaken with the following objectives: To assess the life-skills of the selected adolescents and to determine the variation in their life-skills with their SES and education of parents. School going boys and girls (14-16 years) of classes VII, IX & X were randomly selected from randomly selected schools of five Zones of Delhi Municipal council. SES scale by Tiwari et.al (2010) and Life-Skills Assessment Scale by Subasree and Nair (2010) were used for collection of data. On statistical analysis it was found that Sample adolescents had average level of life skills. Dimension wise analysis revealed that they scored least in the dimension of coping with stress, pointing to the need for more emphasis on acquisition of this skill to deal with the ever demanding requirements of everyday life. A highly significant correlation found between parental education and levels of life-skills of adolescents, further fortify the notion that education plays a crucial role in making parents aware of the needs of their children.

Index Terms- Adolescents, Coping with Stress, Life-Skills, Parental Education.

• Introduction

The notion of Life-Skills draws its roots from the inherent desire of mankind to live a fulfilling and happy life in coherence with the environment. Human beings tend to learn skills for life from a very young age and keep evolving with passage of time, learning to deal with the complexities of life. This need is enhanced during certain phases of life. Adolescence is one of them. Adolescence is the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from ages 10 to 19. It represents one of the critical transitions in the life span and is marked by a tremendous pace of [physical](#) and [psychological human development](#) and change that is second only to that of infancy (WHO, 2009) www.who.int. [Adolescent health](#)). The adolescents are in a state of confusion, stress and uncertainty about coping with their lives due to mood disturbances brought on by hormones and the immaturity of the “impulse control” centre in their brains (Kastner & Wyatt, 2002).

Today's fast & materialistic life have left out the emotional part of humans. The society is considered a more conducive place for the cultivation of certain non-academic goals that are more needed in the present day adjustment to the environment. It is very much evident that adolescents are undergoing tremendous turmoil during

this stage (Damle, 2013). Adolescents are unable to understand the emotional turmoil happening within themselves and thus are unable to tackle effectively emotional pain, conflicts, frustrations and anxieties about the future which are often the driving force for high risk behaviour (Chhadva & Kacker, 2013). With a tremendous shift in the structure of society, there is reported rise in teen stress, which can be because of disturbed family dynamics, peer pressure, inability to cope with studies, drug abuse, lack of competence etc. leading to maladaptive behaviour (Singh & Kaur, 2015).

There is a pressing need to understand the factors that give rise to and maintain aggressive behaviour across childhood and adolescence, (Reebye & Moretti, 2005). According to Nair et. al (2005), the family Life education and Life-Skill training Programmes are good support systems for adolescents, as it is a well-known fact that family plays a crucial role in shaping the personality of an individual. In a study conducted by Arati, (2016) to find out the influence of personal variables on core affective life skills of adolescents, it was shown that order of birth and family income has significant influence on interpersonal relationship dimension of life skills. Gender, number of siblings and family type has no significant influence on core affective life skills. Good support from the family can equip the children with skills for life. If adolescents can learn how to deal positively with their problems, they are less prone to becoming victims of any social or personal evils (Chhadva & Kacker, 2013).

With cultures and lifestyles in transition, many young people are not adequately equipped with life skills to help them deal with the augmented demands and stresses they experience. Effective use of Life-Skills can influence the way children feel about others and themselves which in turn can add to the children's self confidence and self-esteem (Life-Skills Education and CCE Manual CBSE, 2010). Productivity, self-esteem, self-confidence interpersonal relationships are also affected (Subashree & Nair, 2014). Improvement in Life skills can result in individuals making informed choices to serve the interests of self and others, becoming "proactive" and change agents. They are able to resolve conflicts, cope with stress and develop negotiating skills for personal and social interests. Life-Skills play an important role in the promotion of mental well-being which contributes to our motivation to look after ourselves and others. It helps one to understand and deal with relationships, friends, parents, teachers, etc. People who do not have a clear definition of life are never happy and content. They will not be able to move ahead in life. If a child is empowered to bring an understanding and balance in life, he will grow up to be more satisfied (Khwaja, 2011).

Life-skills can be best understood as the abilities for positive and adaptive behaviour, which enable individuals to deal effectively with day to day needs and challenges. "Adaptive" means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust to difficult circumstances. "Positive" behaviour implies that a person is capable of handling adverse situations and can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions (WHO, 1993). Life skills means the everyday skills that people need to live a liberated life and the skills that they need to relate to other people. In paying attention to skills learning, it is important that we remember the vital role that life skills play and that we develop them in everyone. Life skills are those skills that are not related to a certain intellectual or vocational discipline, but they describe the basic competencies for maintaining a fulfilling and independent existence (www.ialse.in). Actually no life skill is used alone; there is always a combination of more than one. Major

life skills include problem solving, decision making, creative and critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal skills, empathy, and self-awareness, coping with stress and emotions. These Life-skills have further been clustered by WHO (1995) as; Thinking skill, Social skills, and Emotional skills. Effective acquisition and application of life skills can impact the way we sense things about ourselves and others, and equally influence the way we are perceived by others. They contribute to our perceptions of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem (www.jsscon.org) and can be acquired by instruction and also by personal experience.

Emphasis on the development of Life-Skills draws its roots from the Vedic Education system in which main objective was to develop the physical, moral and intellectual powers of men. It was not merely theoretical but related to realities of life. The pupils comprehended the various problems of life through listening, intellection, reflection and meditation (Disha -Education, 2015). Life-Skills Based Education is now recognized as a methodology to address a variety of issues of child and youth development and thematic responses including HIV/AIDS, violence against children and status of women (World Development Report, 2007). Life skills are operationalised in specific situations. Opportunities have to be provided for developing these skills. The basic institutions laying the foundation of these skills are the family and school. The Skill India Campaign-2015 initiated by the Government of India places emphasis on development of Life skills and other tailor made, need based programmes for specific age groups like language & communication skills, personality development and, management skills, behavioural skills and job and employability skills (skillindia.gov.in/). The Discussion document on the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCERT, 2000) has recognised the importance of linking education with life skills: “it is through these skills that pupils can fight the challenges of drug violence, teenage pregnancy, AIDS and many other health related problems. In the Indian context, UNESCO study on Life skills (UNESCO, 2000) in non-formal education has identified self-awareness as the first necessary life skill especially for the disadvantaged and the disabled who need a self-image. The twin of self-awareness is empathy. Awareness of self should be counterbalanced by awareness of others, their different feelings, desires (www.iosrjournals.org).

Central to life-skills philosophy are the concept of self-empowerment and a belief that skills can be learnt, modified and improved as a person develops and adjusts to life’s challenges. Khera and Khosla (2012) in their study investigated the relationship between self-concept and core life skills in randomly selected 500 adolescents studying in secondary classes of Sarvodaya schools situated in south Delhi who had undergone YUVA School Life-Skills Programme (SLP). They suggested that there is a positive correlation between core affective Life-Skills and self-concept of adolescents which means those who possess these essential skills have better confidence in all aspects. Life-skills Education helps in building self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy in adolescents and enables them to translate knowledge and attitudes into actual abilities thereby improving the quality of life and emotional regulation ability to make good lifestyle decisions. Life-skills training plays crucial role in bringing about a behaviour change of adolescents in general and in crisis, it protects them from negative behaviours like drug abuse, risky sexual practices and suicide ideation.

From the above discussion, it thus emerges that life-skills are essential for betterment of life in general and improvement of personality in personal, social, cognitive and other domains. Recognizing the importance of life-

skills, the present research was planned to focus on life-skills of adolescent school going children (14-16 years) and assess their relationship with selected variables.

Research Methodology / Elaborations

The present study was undertaken with a view to explore the life-skills of adolescents of CBSE schools in Delhi Municipal Council Zones. The sample of the study comprised adolescents in the age range of 14-16 years (class VIII, IX & X students). D M C is divided in 11 zones. Multistage Sampling technique was used to select the schools (5 schools were randomly taken from randomly selected 5 zones of Delhi). For the selection of respondents, lottery method was employed to take students from particular schools. From a list of all the students of classes VIII, IX & X, twelve students from each school were taken thus making up a total of 60 students. Both boys and girls were taken. The present research was undertaken with following objectives:

- To assess the life-skills of the selected adolescents.
- To determine the variation in life-skills of respondents with their SES and education of parents.

In order to collect the data for the study, two tools were used.

- SES scale by S. C. Tiwari, Aditya Kumar & Ambrish Kumar (2010), updated version 2013, was taken. Through this scale, Education of parents and Socio Economic status of the respondents was assessed.
- Life –Skills Assessment Scale by R. Subasree, & A. Radhakrishnan Nair (2010) is a multi-dimensional Life Skills Assessment Scale consisting of 100 items (one hundred only) in the form of statements in-built with a 5-point scale for the respondent to check the appropriate response which is most descriptive of him/her viz., Always true of me, Very true of me, Sometimes true of me, Occasionally true of me and Not at all true of me. It has both positive and negative items. The Life Skills Assessment Scale (LSAS) measures ten (10) dimensions of Life Skills. The scores obtained under each dimension represent the level of life skills in the respective domain and summation of all the score obtained under each of the 10 dimensions would evolve as a global score for life skills. Cronbach's coefficient alpha, test retest and split half method was used to establish the reliability while face and content validity was tested for the Life Skills Assessment Scale.

The researchers visited each school and collected the data. LSAS was administered individually to the students, it took 45-50 minutes for one respondent to complete the scale questions. Appropriate statistical techniques to derive the results of the present study like mean, Standard deviation, t test, and Pearson's correlation were applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents for this study comprised boys and girls in the age group of 14 to 16 years belonging to the upper middle (9), middle (23) and lower middle (28) socio economic strata of the society. As for the education of parents, all of them were educated at least up to class XII (20 mothers & 10 fathers). 19 mothers and 20 fathers had completed graduation. 20 fathers and 15 mothers had done post-graduation, while only 10 fathers and 6 mothers had pursued higher degrees. The sample comprised 29 girls and 31 boys.

As depicted in table 1, the frequency of raw scores of the respondents presented a normal distribution whereby very few respondents fell in the very high and few in low category. Maximum scores were obtained in the average category, thus indicating that sample adolescents have average level of life-skills. Respondents fell more in low scores as compared to high scores category. In the research conducted by Sharma (2003), on 347 adolescents of classes VIII, IX & X of a public school in Kathmandu, 51% respondents depicted Life-Skill scores above the mean, termed as having “high level” of life-skills and 171(49%) , “low level” of life-skills scores.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of the scores of the respondents (in brackets) as per the scale interpretation of raw scores. (N=60)

Dimensions / Scores	Very High	High	Average	Low	Very Low
Self -Awareness	Above 48 (1)	44-48 (11)	34-43 (34)	29-33 (12)	Below 29 (2)
Effective Communication	Above 40 (0)	36-40 (5)	26-35 (37)	20-25 (15)	Below 20 (3)
Interpersonal Relations	Above 49 (2)	45-49 (3)	35-44 (39)	30-34 (12)	Below 30 (4)
Creative Thinking	Above 38 (0)	35-38 (3)	26-34 (37)	20-25 (19)	Below 20 (1)
Critical Thinking	Above 52 (0)	48-52 (5)	36-47 (36)	30-35 (15)	Below 30 (4)
Decision Making	Above 48 (0)	44-48 (9)	34-43 (39)	28-33 (11)	Below 28 (1)
Problem Solving	Above 45(0)	41-45 (4)	31-40 (37)	25-30 (15)	Below 25 (4)
Coping With Emotions	Above 47 (0)	43-47 (4)	32-42 (34)	26-31 (15)	Below 26 (7)
Coping With Stress	Above 35 (0)	31-35 (7)	22-30 (26)	16-21 (16)	Below 16 (11)
Global Score	Above 417 (0)	387-417 (4)	325-386 (28)	293-324 (10)	Below 293 (8)

On further analysis of the data it was found that out of the 10 dimensions (Self-awareness, Empathy, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Decision making, Problem Solving, Effective communication ,Interpersonal relationship, Coping with stress and Coping with emotion, adolescents in the age group of 14 to 15 years scored highest in the dimensions of Effective Communication, and Critical thinking, while in dimensions of Self-Awareness and Decision Making, they scored in the high score category (Fig 1.) In the dimensions of Coping with Stress, these adolescents fell in the average category with lowest scores for their age.

Fig.1 Age-wise Distribution of dimensions of Life-Skills.

Further, adolescents in the age group of 15 to 16 years depicted a different trend, they scored highest in the dimensions of, Critical thinking and Effective Communication. Whereas in dimensions of, Self-Awareness, Decision Making and Interpersonal Relationship they fell in the high score category. In the dimensions of Empathy, Creative Thinking and Coping with Stress most adolescents of this age group fell in the average category. It has been suggested by Blakemore & Choudhury (2006) that empathy development undergoes a temporary decline due to cognitive and physiological changes that go together with puberty. Adolescents of both age groups scored least in the dimension of coping with stress, pointing to the need for more emphasis on acquisition of this skill to deal with the ever demanding requirements of everyday life.

Table 2 depicts the age wise scores of adolescents on the ten dimensions of life-skills. Here it is evident that there is highly significant difference between the scores of the two groups in the dimension of Self-awareness and decision making. It may be attributed to the fact that as the adolescents grow there is an enhancement in their abilities. In the dimensions of Empathy and Interpersonal relations significant difference is found. Not much difference between the means of the two groups was found in other dimensions. This could be because a span of one year is not a very long time to observe drastic changes in life skills of adolescents who are still in their growing phase. As such acquisition of life-skills is a continuous process.

Table 2. Age-wise comparison of LSAS scores of the respondents (N=60)

Dimensions	Mean ± S.D. 14to 15 years (N=30)	Mean ± S.D. 15to 16 years (N=30)	t- VALUE	p- value
Self -Awareness	36.0 ± 5.4	40. ± 5.4	-3.28**	0.00
Effective Communication	27.9 ± 4.1	28.3 ± 6.1	-0.28	.774

Empathy	37.2 ± 7.2	40.8 ± 5.1	-2.00*	.054
Interpersonal Relations	35.6 ± 5.5	39.0 ± 4.7	-2.68*	.012
Creative Thinking	27.2 ± 4.1	28.0 ± 4.2	0.69	.495
Critical Thinking	38.7 ± 6.2	39.5 ± 6.7	-0.47	.640
Decision Making	36.1 ± 5.0	39.3 ± 3.8	-2.87**	.008
Problem Solving	31.9 ± 5.8	33.8 ± 5.9	-1.26	.216
Coping With Emotions	34. ± 5.5	32.7 ± 6.2	0.87	.389
Coping With Stress	23.3 ± 6.0	21.2 ± 6.6	1.53	.135

Furthermore, (Fig. 2) when students were compared for their score on the different dimensions of Life-Skills on the basis of sex, it was revealed that both girls and boys had average scores in Self-Awareness, Effective communication, Critical Thinking, Interpersonal Relations and Decision Making. On one hand, scores of girls were less in former three, while on the other, more on latter two. In the dimensions of Problem Solving and Coping with Stress, both sexes scored low, though girls had lower scores in both. Very low scores were attained in rest of the dimensions. Although girls had equal scores as that of boys in Empathy, they had an edge over boys in coping with Stress (both boys and girls fell in the very low category of scores as per the LSAS).

Fig. 2 Sex-wise comparison of Dimensions of LSAS

As per the illustration in table 3, it can be seen that there is no significant difference between the scores of boys and girls on the ten dimensions of life-skills. However mean scores of girls are higher than boys in dimensions of Self-

awareness, Effective communication, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Problem solving and Coping with emotions. In rest of the dimensions boys have scored higher.

Table 3. Sex-Wise Comparison of LSAS Scores of the Respondents (N=60)

Dimensions	Mean ± S.D (Girls) N=29	Mean ± S.D (Boys) N=31	t- value	p- value
Self -Awareness	38.3 ± 6.6	37.7 ± 4.8	0.89	0.37
Effective Communication	40.3 ± 6.4	37.9 ± 6.4	1.26	0.21
Empathy	28.0 ± 4.5	28.2 ± 5.8	1.62	0.11
Interpersonal Relations	37.0 ± 4.8	37.6 ± 5.9	0.20	0.83
Creative Thinking	28.1 ± 4.3	27.2 ± 4.0	0.19	0.84
Critical Thinking	39.7 ± 6.6	38.5 ± 6.3	1.65	0.10
Decision Making	37.5 ± 4.9	37.9 ± 4.6	0.49	0.62
Problem Solving	34.1 ± 6.7	31.7 ± 4.9	0.28	0.77
Coping With Emotions	33.8 ± 6.2	32.9 ± 5.6	0.57	0.57
Coping With Stress	21.3 ± 7.0	23.0 ± 5.7	1.2	0.23

As given in Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviations of the selected adolescents (N=60) were compared with those of the scores obtained by standardization sample (890 adolescents of age ranging 12 years to 19 years having 360 girls and 530 boys) of Life-Skills Assessment Scale (Subasree and Nair, 2010). It was noted that the values for the dimensions of Self-Awareness and Decision Making were similar to the LSAS scales in terms of both Mean and SD. In the case of Critical thinking significant difference between the two scores ($p > 0.05$) was found. In the case of all other dimensions, highly significant ($p > 0.01$) difference was found between the scores of the respondents and the LSAS scores, whereby sample adolescents of the present study had higher average in dimension of Empathy and lower scores in rest of the dimensions.

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviation of all Respondents as compared with those of the Standardised Scale Scores (N=60)

Dimensions	Mean ± S.D. (Sample)	Mean ± S.D. (LSAS Scale)	t- VALUE	p- value
Self-Awareness	38.03 ± 5.75	38.84 ± 4.91	.004	0.99
Effective Communication	28.17 ± 5.22	40.77 ± 5.15	18.71**	0.00
Empathy	39.05 ± 6.52	30.31 ± 4.77	10.38**	0.00
Interpersonal Relations	37.35 ± 5.37	39.43 ± 4.89	3.00**	0.00
Creative Thinking	27.63 ± 4.18	29.22 ± 4.37	2.93**	0.00
Critical Thinking	39.15 ± 6.43	40.99 ± 5.56	2.21*	0.03
Decision Making	37.75 ± 4.78	38.34 ± 5.05	0.95	0.34

Problem Solving	32.88±5.92	35.04±4.77	2.82**	0.00
Coping With Emotions	33.35±5.91	36.51±5.24	4.13**	0.00
Coping With Stress	22.25±6.39	25.74±4.59	4.23**	0.00

** Difference between means is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Difference between means is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The ten dimensions of Life-Skills were correlated with the education of mother and father, and also with that of the Socio economic status of the respondents (Table 5), using Pearson’s Correlation. Results depicted that there was a highly significant correlation between father’s education and the Global score of the adolescents, highly significant relation was found between father’s education and all the dimensions of life-skills except coping with stress. Similarly Socio Economic Status had highly significant correlation with Global Score (p>0.01). Comparable results were found by Anuradha (2012) in her study of adolescents studying in 9th standard in Tirupati town (India) whereby moderate association was found between life-skills and father’s education; self-concept score and family income. Parents are in a unique position to affect the behavior of their children. Indeed, children develop skills such as communication, problem solving, and critical thinking through modelling at home (Velasco, 2017).

Except for coping with stress and coping with emotions, highly significant correlation was found with mother’s education. SES was also significantly correlated with Self-awareness of adolescents (p>0.05).

Table 5. CORRELATION OF DIMENSIONS OF LIFE-SKILLS WITH EDUCATION OF PARENTS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Dimensions Of Life-Skills	Mother’s Education	Father’s Education	SES
Coping With Stress	.188	.161	.030
Coping With Emotions	.313*	.423**	.009
Problem Solving	.535**	.496**	.082
Decision Making	.485**	.436**	.195
Critical Thinking	.631**	.533**	.119
Creative Thinking	.521**	.613**	.207
Interpersonal Relations	.536**	.413**	.086
Effective Communication	.493**	.397**	.017
Empathy	.483**	.464**	.211
Self-Awareness	.592**	.531**	.299*
Global Score	.083*	.728**	.836**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

When the ten dimensions were clubbed together as the three core life skills (Table 6), results depicted that there was a highly significant correlation of Global score of the adolescents with their SES and education of the parents ($p>0.01$). These findings are in line with the study by Sharma (2003) in which maternal education was significantly associated with higher life skill levels in adolescents. Connectedness and family support were other important factors influencing the level of life skills in the adolescents.

Table 6. **Correlation of Core Life-Skills with Background Variables**

	Thinking Skills	Emotional Skills	Social Skills	Global Score
Age	.237	.002	.276	183
Sex	.145	.068	.059	079
Mother's Education	.083	.166	.160	.783**
Father's Education	.132	.035	.097	.728**
Socio Economic Status	.073	.122	.136	.836**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the findings it can be concluded that the Life-skills of adolescents are effected by various factors, socio economic status and education of parents being some of them.

Majority of the respondents who participated in this study had average levels of life-skills as compared with the standard LSAS scores. Lowest scores obtained by the adolescents in the dimension of 'coping with stress', boys and girls alike points to an urgent need for better life-skills training opportunities for them so that they can deal with the stress and strain of their growing years. The turbulent teen years whereby they are confronted by challenges on the personal, emotional, social and academic front. A highly significant correlation found between parental education and levels of life-skills of adolescents, further fortify the notion that education plays a crucial role in making parents aware of the needs of their children. Educated parents are more conscious about the growth opportunities for their children, hence they can provide a conducive environment to their children to learn and grow well.

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