

Study assessing life skills among school going adolescents in relation to personal variables

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Abstract: Adolescence is a period when various changes take place in their body, mind as well as in their behavior and habit forming. This brings the need for them to know dealing with these changes by Life Skill Education (LSE) beginning from school level itself. But LSE is hardly given in schools of Meerut. Thus, the present study was done with objective to assess the life skills of school going adolescents of urban Meerut and to determine the variations in life skills of adolescents with their personal variables. The present cross sectional study was done with purposive sampling technique for the selection of schools and total Enumeration of the entire adolescent from selected schools belonging to age group of 12-19 years which came out to be a sample of 1185 adolescents. Most of the adolescents scored average in the global life skills score and in each of the ten dimensions of life skills. Significant difference was found in the global life skills score with age, gender, both the parent's education and mother's occupation of the adolescents.

Life skill education should be inculcated in school curriculum as it will help in promoting health and well being of adolescents to face their future.

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I. Introduction

Adolescence is derived from Latin verb "adolescere"; the literal meaning is "to grow to maturity". It is a transition period where many physical, social, emotional and psychological changes take place ^[1]. It is also the stage when they extend their relationships beyond parents and family and are intensely influenced by their peers and the outside world in general. Adolescents are capable of abstract thinking, better articulation and of developing an independent ideology. Adolescence is a time of increased self-awareness, self-identity, self-consciousness, preoccupation with image, and concern with social acceptance ^[2]. If adolescents can learn how to deal positively with their problems, they are less prone to become victims of any social or personal evils ^[3]. This positive dealing of adolescents with their problems can be acquired with the help of developing life skills among them.

Life skill refers to positive behaviors that encompasses a mix of knowledge, behavior, attitudes and values; and designates the possession of certain skills and know-how to do something positively, or reach a goal ^[4]. Emphasis on the development of Life-Skills draws its roots from 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 ^[5].

Analysis of the life skills field suggests that there is a core set of skills that are at the heart of skill based initiatives for the promotion of the health and well-being of children and adolescents; the ten core life skills are- Self-awareness, Empathy, Creative thinking, Critical thinking, Decision making, Problem Solving, Effective communication, Interpersonal relationship, Coping with emotions and Coping with stress ^[6]. Each of these core life skills is prerequisite for each other and no life skill is used alone; there is always a combination of more than one ^[5]. Life skills are used every moment of our lives in various situations like choosing friends, career developing, breaking habits, making and breaking relationship, following discipline, understanding one's needs, solving problems, interacting with teachers and parents; therefore, life skills are the building blocks of one's behavior and need to be learnt well to lead a healthy, meaningful and productive life ^[7].

School is an appropriate place for the introduction of life skills education because of the role of schools in the socialization of young people, access to children and adolescents on a large scale, economic efficiencies, experienced teachers already in place, high credibility with parents and community members, and possibilities with short and long term evaluation^[6]. The Discussion document on the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCERT, 2000) has recognized the importance of linking education with life skills^[5].

However, currently, Life Skill Education (LSE) is hardly given in schools of Meerut which shows the need to make caregivers, i.e., teachers and parents aware of it. Thus, the objectives of this study were to assess the life skills of school going adolescents of urban Meerut and to determine the variations in life skills of adolescents with their personal variables.

II. Material And Methods

The present school based cross-sectional study was done from March, 2017 to February, 2018 after obtaining clearance from Institutional Ethical Committee of Subharti Medical College, Swami Vivekananda Subharti University. This was followed by a written permission and consent from the Principals of selected schools. Informed written consent was obtained from each adolescent and assent from their parents was also taken. Purposive sampling technique was used for the selection of schools from the registered English medium schools of urban Meerut. The selected schools that refused or denied to give permission were excluded and next convenient school was chosen till four English medium schools were finalized. The study was done in only English medium school as LSAS (Life Skills Assessment Scale) was pre-tested and pre validated questionnaire in English language among Indian adolescents^[4]. Total Enumeration of all the adolescent from selected schools belonging to age group of 12-19 years (as notified by Principals of the respective school) who gave consent and were willing to participate were given LSAS questionnaires to fill after explaining instructions about filling the questionnaires. Also, adolescents whose parents gave assent for participation in the study and who were present in school on the days of data collection/ survey were included. By total enumeration of adolescents from selected schools and inclusion criteria, it came out to be a sample of 1185 adolescents. The overall score of LSAS in all ten dimensions of life skills was represented as Global Score. A total global score of <293 (mean < -2 SD) was considered very low score, between 293- 324 (-1SD to -2 SD) as low score, 325- 386 (-1SD to +1SD) as average score, 387- 417 (+1SD to +2SD) as high score and >417 (> +2 SD) was considered very high score^[4]. Data entry and data analysis of was done using appropriate statistical tests by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19.0. Independent t-test was used to ascertain the significance of differences between mean values of two groups. The p- value of less than 0.05 was considered as cutoff value for significance.

III. Result

In the present study, most (61.3%) of participant was in the age group of 12 to 15 years and 38.7% were in the age group of 16 to 19 years. Male adolescents were 52.7% and females were 47.3%. As for the education of parents, majority of fathers were graduate or above (73.7%) and 26.3% were educated up to school level; similarly 67.7% of mothers were graduate or above and 32.3% were educated up to school level. In case of occupation of parents, majority of fathers were working (94.4%) and least were unemployed (5.6%); whereas only 18.5% of mothers were working and majority were housewife (81.5%). Majority of the study participants were Hindus (80.3%). Muslims were 5.9%, Sikhs were 2.4% and Christians were 0.5%. 11.0% of the adolescents were either Jain or Agnostic or not willing to reveal about their religion. Also, 56.4% of the study participants belonged to nuclear family and 42.8% belonged to joint family.

Graph 1 is depicting about frequency of scores obtained by participants in various categories from very high score to very low score of LSAS. Majority of adolescents scored average in all the dimensions of life skills and also in overall global score. It was also seen that apart from average scoring, participants scored more in low and very low category as compared to high and very high category except for only self awareness in which contrary was seen.

Graph 1: Distribution of core life skills & global score of participants (n=1185)

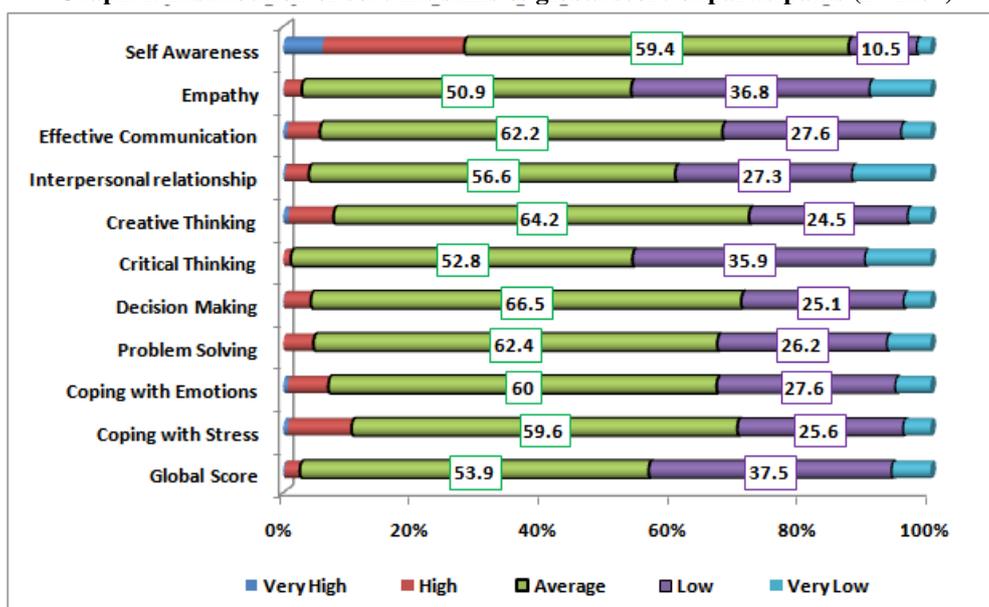


Table 1 is describing about the age wise scores of LSAS of the adolescents on the ten dimensions and overall global score. It was observed that there was significant difference between the scores of two age groups in the dimensions of self awareness, empathy, interpersonal relationship, decision making and in the global score. It was marked from the table that as adolescents grow there was improvement in their ability of being self aware, empathy and decision making capability whereas it was also seen that the adolescents' interpersonal relationship decreased as they grew older. Not much difference was found between the means of two age groups in other dimensions.

Table 1: Age wise comparison of life skills score of study participants (n=1185)

Dimension	Mean ± SD 12 to 15 years (n=726)	Mean ± SD 16 to 19 years (n=459)	t- value	p-value
Self Awareness	39.6 ± 5.6	40.7 ± 5.5	-3.290	0.001
Empathy	35.67 ± 4.9	36.75 ± 4.8	-3.647	0.000
Effective Communication	27.8 ± 4.9	27.7 ± 5.1	0.649	0.517
Interpersonal relationship	36.1 ± 5.2	35.4 ± 5.5	2.171	0.030
Creative Thinking	27.9 ± 4.5	28.3 ± 4.6	-1.270	0.204
Critical Thinking	35.8 ± 5.2	36.3 ± 5.4	-1.491	0.136
Decision Making	35.5 ± 4.5	36.2 ± 4.4	-2.698	0.007
Problem Solving	32.5 ± 5.2	32.7 ± 5.1	-0.794	0.427
Coping with Emotions	34.0 ± 5.4	34.2 ± 5.8	-0.660	0.510
Coping with Stress	24.2 ± 5.1	24.2 ± 4.9	0.252	0.801
Global Score	329.1 ± 26.5	332.3 ± 27.4	-1.995	0.046

Table 2 depicts about the gender wise comparison of LSAS of the adolescents on the ten dimensions and overall global score. In the dimension of interpersonal relationship, creative thinking and problem solving both males and females scored almost similar. It was observed that there was significant difference between the scores of male and female adolescents in the dimensions of self awareness, empathy, decision making, coping with emotions and with global score where female adolescents were found to be more self aware, had better empathy and were better in both decision making and coping with emotions as compared to male adolescents. Not much difference was found between the means of two gender groups in other dimensions.

Table 2: Gender wise comparison of life skills score of study participants (n=1185)

Dimension	Mean ± SD Male (n=625)	Mean ± SD Female (n=560)	t-value	p-value
Self Awareness	39.2 ± 5.6	41.0 ± 5.5	-5.649	0.000
Empathy	35.2 ± 4.8	37.2 ± 4.9	-7.241	0.000
Effective Communication	27.6 ± 4.8	28.1 ± 5.2	-1.440	0.150
Interpersonal relationship	35.9 ± 4.9	35.6 ± 5.7	1.248	0.212
Creative Thinking	28.1 ± 4.5	28.1 ± 4.6	-0.115	0.909

Critical Thinking	35.9 ± 4.9	36.1 ± 5.5	-0.647	0.517
Decision Making	35.3 ± 4.3	36.4 ± 4.5	-4.278	0.000
Problem Solving	32.3 ± 5.2	32.8 ± 5.1	-1.607	0.108
Coping with Emotions	33.5 ± 5.1	34.7 ± 5.9	-3.958	0.000
Coping with Stress	24.1 ± 4.8	24.4 ± 5.3	-1.241	0.215
Global Score	326.8 ± 24.4	334.2 ± 29.1	-4.732	0.000

Table 3 illustrates about the comparison of father’s education on the adolescents LSAS with respect to ten dimensions and overall global score. Education level of the adolescents’ father was divided in two groups- one group being graduated and above and other group being educated up to school level. It was observed that there was significant difference between the mean scores of two groups of adolescents’ father’s education in only one dimension of self awareness and in overall global score. The adolescents whose father were graduated and above were found to be more self aware as compared to the adolescents whose father were educated up to school level. No significant difference was found between the means of two groups in other dimensions.

Table 3: Comparison of Father’s education on life skills score of study participants (n=1185)

Dimension	Mean ± SD Graduate & above (n=874)	Mean ± SD Up to school level (n=311)	t-value	p-value
Self Awareness	40.4 ± 5.5	38.9 ± 5.7	4.100	0.000
Empathy	36.2 ± 4.9	36.1 ± 4.9	0.273	0.785
Effective Communication	27.8 ± 5.1	27.6 ± 4.7	0.787	0.431
Interpersonal relationship	35.8 ± 5.3	35.8 ± 5.4	-0.001	0.999
Creative Thinking	28.2 ± 4.5	27.7 ± 4.5	1.355	0.176
Critical Thinking	36.1 ± 5.3	35.7 ± 5.1	1.240	0.215
Decision Making	35.8 ± 4.5	35.6 ± 4.3	0.680	0.497
Problem Solving	32.7 ± 5.2	32.3 ± 5.1	1.209	0.227
Coping with Emotions	34.2 ± 5.6	33.8 ± 5.5	0.883	0.378
Coping with Stress	24.2 ± 5.2	24.2 ± 4.7	-0.073	0.942
Global Score	331.3 ± 27.5	327.6 ± 25.1	2.027	0.043

Table 4 illustrates about the comparison of mother’s education on the adolescents LSAS with respect to ten dimensions and overall global score. Education level of the adolescents’ mother was divided in two groups- one group being graduated and above and other group being educated up to school level. It was observed that there was significant difference between the mean scores of two groups of adolescents’ mother’s education in effective communication, coping with emotions, coping with stress and in global score. The adolescents whose mother were graduated and above were found to have better effective communication, were able to cope better with emotions and stress and scored better in overall global score as compared to the adolescents whose mother were educated up to school level. No significant difference was found between the means of two groups in other dimensions.

It can be stated from both the parents’ education that mother’s education level had more impact on adolescents’ life skills than father’s education as more of the dimensions of life skills were found to be statistically significant with mother’s education than with father’s education.

Table 4: Comparison of Mother’s education on life skills score of study participants (n=1185)

Dimension	Mean ± SD Graduate & above (n=802)	Mean ± SD Up to school level (n=383)	t-value	p-value
Self Awareness	40.2 ± 5.6	39.7 ± 5.6	1.481	0.139
Empathy	36.3 ± 5.1	35.8 ± 4.8	1.487	0.137
Effective Communication	28.1 ± 5.2	27.2 ± 4.6	3.084	0.002
Interpersonal relationship	35.8 ± 5.3	35.7 ± 5.2	0.244	0.807
Creative Thinking	28.2 ± 4.7	27.8 ± 4.3	1.291	0.197
Critical Thinking	36.1 ± 5.3	35.8 ± 5.1	0.835	0.404
Decision Making	35.9 ± 4.4	35.5 ± 4.6	1.471	0.142
Problem Solving	32.6 ± 5.2	32.4 ± 5.2	0.577	0.564
Coping with Emotions	34.3 ± 5.6	33.6 ± 5.4	1.999	0.046
Coping with Stress	24.4 ± 5.2	23.7 ± 4.7	2.131	0.033
Global Score	331.8 ± 27.7	327.2 ± 24.9	2.752	0.006

Table 5 demonstrates about the comparison of father’s occupation on the adolescents LSAS with respect to ten dimensions and overall global score. Occupation of the adolescents’ father was divided in two groups- one group being working and other group being unemployed. It was observed that there was significant difference between the mean scores of two groups of adolescents’ father’s occupation in only one dimension of

coping with emotions only. The adolescents with working father were found to have better ability to cope up with emotions as compared to the adolescents whose father were unemployed. No significant difference was found between the means of two groups in other dimensions.

Table 5: Comparison of Father’s occupation on life skills score of study participants (n=1185)

Dimension	Mean ± SD Working (n=1119)	Mean ± SD Unemployed (n=66)	t-value	p-value
Self Awareness	40.1 ± 5.6	39.7 ± 5.8	0.501	0.617
Empathy	36.1 ± 4.9	36.2 ± 4.7	-0.157	0.875
Effective Communication	27.8 ± 5.1	27.5 ± 4.4	0.521	0.602
Interpersonal relationship	35.7 ± 5.4	36.3 ± 4.8	-0.783	0.434
Creative Thinking	28.1 ± 4.5	27.6 ± 4.4	0.781	0.435
Critical Thinking	36.1 ± 5.2	35.3 ± 5.6	1.123	0.262
Decision Making	35.8 ± 4.5	34.8 ± 4.4	1.734	0.083
Problem Solving	32.6 ± 5.2	32.3 ± 5.3	0.476	0.634
Coping with Emotions	34.2 ± 5.5	32.7 ± 5.7	2.006	0.045
Coping with Stress	24.2 ± 5.1	23.8 ± 4.8	0.578	0.564
Global Score	330.6 ± 27.1	326.3 ± 24.3	1.267	0.205

Table 6 demonstrates about the comparison of mother’s occupation on the adolescents LSAS with respect to ten dimensions and overall global score. Occupation of the adolescents’ mother was divided in two groups- one group being working and other group being housewife. It was observed that there was significant difference between the mean scores of two groups of adolescents’ mother’s occupation in self awareness, creative thinking and overall global life skills score. The adolescents with working mother were found to have better self awareness, creative thinking and overall global life skills as compared to the adolescents whose mother were housewife. No significant difference was found between the means of two groups in other dimensions.

Table 6: Comparison of Mother’s occupation on life skills score of study participants (n=1185)

Dimension	Mean ± SD Working (n=219)	Mean ± SD Housewife (n=966)	t-value	p-value
Self Awareness	41.1 ± 5.6	39.8 ± 5.6	3.039	0.002
Empathy	36.6 ± 4.9	35.9 ± 4.9	1.649	0.099
Effective Communication	26.2 ± 5.4	27.7 ± 4.9	1.265	0.206
Interpersonal relationship	36.1 ± 5.6	35.7 ± 5.3	0.921	0.357
Creative Thinking	28.8 ± 4.6	27.8 ± 4.5	2.834	0.005
Critical Thinking	35.9 ± 5.8	36.0 ± 5.1	-0.293	0.769
Decision Making	36.3 ± 4.2	35.7 ± 4.5	1.692	0.091
Problem Solving	33.1 ± 4.9	32.4 ± 5.2	1.710	0.088
Coping with Emotions	34.7 ± 6.1	33.9 ± 5.5	1.865	0.062
Coping with Stress	24.6 ± 5.3	24.1 ± 4.9	1.450	0.147
Global Score	335.3 ± 29.3	329.2 ± 26.3	3.042	0.002

IV. Discussion

The age group taken in by Slater A et al [2], Dr R Subasree et al [4] and Sharma S [8] was similar to the present study; while in the study by Chhadva D et al [3] and Dhingra R et al [5] the age group of 14-16 years, in the study by Bhuvanewari et al [7] majority (75%) were of 18 years and in the study by Bridget Chelladurai [11] age group of 13-14 years was taken. Majority of adolescents were females in the study by Bhuvanewari et al [7] (95%) and R Jeyanthi [9] (66%) whereas majorities were male adolescents in the study by Dr R Subasree et al [4] (59.4%), Sharma S [8] (51%) and M Arulsubila et al [12] (56%) which was similar to the present study (52.7%). Slater A et al [2] and Bridget Chelladurai [11] conducted their study on only adolescent girls. Majority of fathers (83.4%) were graduate and above in the study by Dhingra R et al [5] which was similar to the present study (73.7%) whereas majority were educated up to school level (86%) in the study by Bridget Chelladurai [11]. Most of the mothers (66.7%) were graduate and above in the study by Dhingra R et al [5] which was similar to the present study (67.7%) whereas majorities were educated up to school level (82%) in the study by Bridget Chelladurai [11]. Most of the adolescents were working (57.5%) in the study by Bhuvanewari et al [7] whereas in the present study majority of fathers were working (94.4%). Similar to the present study, majority of mothers were housewives in the study by Bhuvanewari et al [7]. Similar to the present study, most of the adolescents belonged to nuclear family in the study by Dr R Subasree et al [4] (76.3%), Bhuvanewari et al [7] (72.5%), Bridget Chelladurai [11] (86%) and M Arulsubila et al [12] (82%).

Predominance towards average scoring in all the dimensions of life skills and also in overall global score was seen in the study by Chakra A [1], Dhingra R et al [5], Bhuvanewari et al [7] and Sijmol S [10] which was similar to the present study whereas contrary results was seen by Bridget Chelladurai [11] where majority of

adolescents scored low and very low overall global life skills score with significant difference of parent's education with all dimensions of life skills (at 0.01 level).

Similar to the present study, significant difference was found in the age groups with the dimensions of self awareness, empathy, interpersonal relationship, decision making and with the global score in the study by Dhingra R et al ^[5].

Both males and females scored almost similar in the dimension of interpersonal relationship in the study by Dhingra R et al ^[5] and in the present study in addition to few other dimensions which was different among both the studies. Contrary to the present study, no significant difference was found of the two genders with any of the ten dimensions of life skills the study by Dhingra R et al ^[5] and M Arulsubila et al ^[12] though mean scores of girls was higher in the dimensions of self awareness and coping with emotions in the study by Dhingra R et al ^[5] and decision making in the study by M Arulsubila et al ^[12] similar to the present study in addition to few other dimensions which was different among these studies. R Jeyanthi ^[9] and Sijmol S ^[10] concluded that female adolescents had significantly higher life skills than males.

In the study by Dhingra R et al ^[5] and Sharma S ^[8], father's education was found to be significant with overall global score which was similar to the present study. Also, there was no significant difference found between father's education and coping with stress by Dhingra R et al ^[5] whereas in the present study except for self awareness, no significant difference was found with father's education.

In the study by Dhingra R et al ^[5] and the present study, only effective communication was found to be significant with mother's education in addition to few other dimensions which was different for both the studies. Effective communication was not found to be significant with any variable in the study by Chhadva D et al ^[3]. Similar to the present study, mother's education was significantly associated with increased level of overall global life skills of adolescents in the study by Sharma S ^[8].

None of the study assessed the demographic factor- religion and the difference of life skill score of adolescents with that of their parent's occupation.

V. Conclusion

Proper counseling facility should be there in the school regarding life skills. The adolescents should be counseled or trained regarding life skills either by the teachers or by the special life skills trainers. Also, regular monitoring for life skills should be done in the school itself so that the adolescents can be educated about coping with emotions, stress or pressure, should be able to solve their problem and make decision, should have empathy, effective communication and personal skills as it will help in promoting health and well being of adolescents to face their future. Hence, life skill education should be inculcated in school curriculum.

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