



Life Skills Assessment Among Higher Secondary School Students: A Theoretical Review

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Abstract

Life skills have evolved to be a very vital part of modern education since it contributes to the all-around development of people and not just the achievement of academic goals. The current paper discusses the chosen research on life skills in higher secondary school. It reviews the studies and analyses the connection between life skills and such psychological and educational variables as self-awareness, self-concept, self-esteem, academic achievement, gender, type of school, and social background. The paper is theoretical and review-based in nature and uses secondary data based on the chosen studies and institutional frameworks on life skills. The review has indicated that the life skills are closely interrelated with the self-related features of students and could also have a positive influence on academic performance. The studies also suggest that the discrepancy in life skills could be found between gender, school context, and social background, but these are not constantly maintained. The other key conclusion is that life skills are multidimensional, such that they encompass emotional, cognitive, social, and behavioural competencies. The review has suggested that life skills must be viewed as a core aspect in higher secondary education as opposed to being an extra activity. It concludes that life skills development must be reinforced by structured programmes, trained teachers, and supportive programs to the students.

Keywords: Life skills, higher secondary students, adolescence, academic achievement, self-esteem

Introduction

The modern world does not simply bring education that is limited to the imparting of subject knowledge. It is currently a well-known process that must facilitate the overall growth of learners in order to enable them to be attentive to the demands of contemporary life. With this new educational reality, life skills development has turned into a vital issue for schools and educators. It is usually perceived that life skills are adaptive, positive behavioural abilities that help individuals to cope with the demands and challenges in their daily life effectively (World Health Organisation, 2003). These are psychosocial and interpersonal competence, referring to self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, communication, relationship-building, and stress and emotion coping abilities (World Health Organisation, 2003; UNESCO-UNEVOC, n.d.).

The significance of life skills at the higher secondary level is even greater since, at this stage, students are in their adolescence stage, which is a period of significant physical, emotional, cognitive and social changes. Adolescence is defined by UNICEF as a transformational period, during which adolescents start to feel new emotions, build more serious relationships with their peers, seek identity and become ready to find their place in society (UNICEF, n.d.-a). Life at this stage is said to be linked to academic pressures, moodiness, social comparison, lack of certainty about the future, and increased responsibility. Consequently, higher secondary students need not only academic education but also personal and social skills that will enable them to cope with the change, make wise choices, and remain emotionally stable (UNICEF, 2019). The life skills education helps students become more responsible, socially competent people, confident, and self-aware. UNICEF India states that positive educational outcomes associated with life skills include positive behaviour in the classroom, increases in attendance, and academic achievement (UNICEF India, 2019). On the same note, UNICEF also highlights education as providing children with the life skills in addition to the knowledge, which will help them succeed both in school and at work and in day-to-day living (UNICEF, n.d.-b). Therefore, life skills are not other or secondarily related to education; instead, they are core to significant learning and sound development of personality. The process of acquiring life skills is particularly applicable to the case of higher secondary school students, since this process tends to affect their subsequent educational, professional, and personal careers. Students start to take on independent decisions, develop values and visions and know how to cope with even more complex social situations. Employees with the requisite life skills will tend to be more equipped to deal with stress as well as communicate better, solve issues in a positive way, and foster positive relationships. In that regard, life skills will not only play a one-dimensional role in adjusting to school, but also in long-term individual development. The given paper is a theoretical overview of life skills in students of higher secondary schools. It is founded on the individual studies on the various dimensions of life skills, their association with self-awareness, self-concept, self-esteem, academic success, gender, school type, tribal and non-tribal, as well as academic stream.

Research Questions

- i) What is the relationship between life skills and psychological variables such as self-awareness, self-concept, and self-esteem among higher secondary school students?
- ii) How do life skills influence academic achievement among higher secondary students across different genders, school types, and social backgrounds (e.g., tribal and non-tribal groups)?
- iii) What are the key educational implications and effective strategies for integrating life skills education into the higher secondary curriculum to promote holistic student development?

Objectives of the Paper

1. To examine some selected research concerning life skills amongst the students in higher secondary schools.
2. To determine the relationship between life skills and the chosen variables of psychological and educational ones.
3. To determine key trends and patterns that roll out of the reviewed studies.
4. To present the input educational implications of life skills at the higher secondary level of education.

Methodology

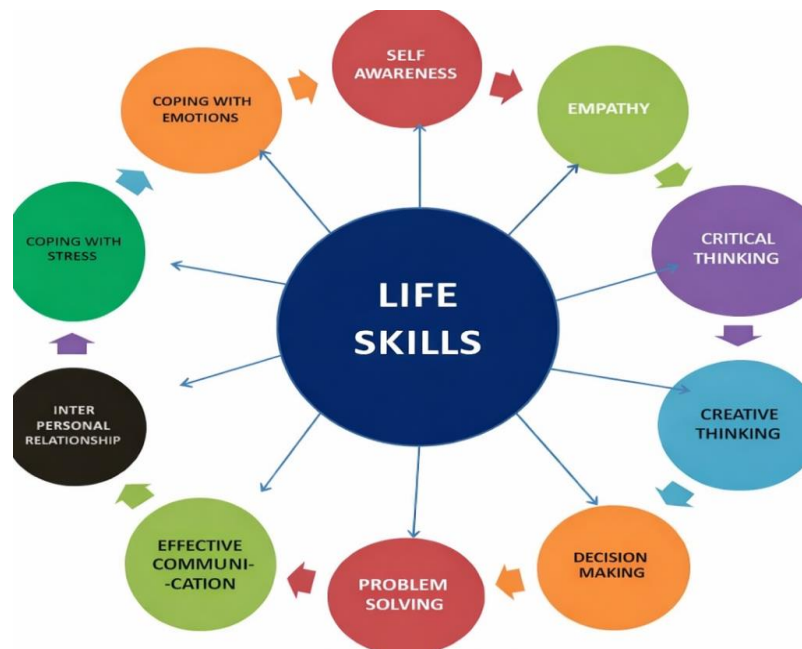
The paper is review-based and theoretical. It is based on secondary data gathered from research studies selected for their focus on the life skills of higher secondary school students. The research works carried out in the review were selected on the basis of their concentration on vital dimensions of life capabilities as well as their connection to various variables, which consist of self-awareness, self-concept, self-esteem, academic success, sex, school type, and social background. The findings of the studies have been structured in a descriptive and analytical approach and used to make broader educational implications.

Conceptual Understanding of Life Skills

Life skills can be defined as a combination of psychosocial and interpersonal skills that allow one to make good decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, develop healthy relationships, cope with feelings and handle stress. These are not only the skills that are practical according to the well-being of a person, but they are also crucial in terms of success in education and in society.

Life skills are beneficial to students in higher secondary education in various ways. Self-awareness makes them know their strengths, weaknesses, values and goals. Interaction based on communication skills enhances interaction with teachers, other peers, and relatives. These are emotional regulation skills that can assist them in overcoming examination stress or failure, or social conflict. The decision-making and problem-solving assist them in academic and career selection. Therefore, life skills are closely linked with the holistic growth of students.

Source: Adapted from World Health Organisation (2003).



The figure shows the ten fundamental elements of life skills, which are self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, problem solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, coping with stress and coping with emotions.

Review of Related Studies

Goswami (2019) carried out research on self-awareness and life skills in high school learners. The research purpose was to make comparisons between government students and public-school students on five dimensions, such as emotions, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. The study utilized normative survey method and sampled 200 students to show that there was a significant change only in terms of self-regulation but not in terms of emotions, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The significance of this study lies in the fact that the school context could have a particular impact on certain life skills, in particular, those that are related to behavioural control and self-management.

Vemula and Lalramthari (2024) studied the awareness of life skills at Class XII in the Aizawl District. They have focused their study on the fact that education nowadays should not only be academic, but should also possess practical skills like communication, emotional intelligence, time management, financial literacy, and even digital literacy. Research carried out on 150 students showed that there was a major disparity between genders in terms of communication skills, as males gained higher marks in communication, but no disparity in critical thinking. It also did not find a difference in life skills according to the family type. This paper expands the relatedness of life skills to the modern educational requirements and employability.

Devi et al. (2024) examined the relationship between life skills of higher secondary school students and self-concept. The researchers used 200 students, standardised tools on both self-concept and life skills, which discovered low positive correlation between both variables. The paper indicated that when self-concept is improved, this may result in the development of life skills. The importance of this finding is that self-concept

affects the view students have about themselves and their level of confidence in their engagement with the world.

The study conducted by Bala et al. (2024) examined the life skills associated with academic performance in senior secondary school students in Sonepat District. The researchers utilised 100 students as the sample and discovered that almost half of the students possessed average life skills and average grades. It also identified a positive association between life skills and academic performance. Boys had higher scores in life skills, and girls in academics. The analysis suggested training initiatives to enhance life skills as one of the methods that could assist in academic achievements. This study indicates that personal life skills do not stand alone from academic studies but seem to be connected to academic learning.

In a comparative study of tribal and non-tribal girls in senior secondary level, Samant and Joshi (2025) determined academic stream as a dependent variable and compared the relationship with independent variables. Through a descriptive survey design and a sample of 200 girls, the researcher discovered that most of the students were high in their life skills, yet the non-tribal girls scored higher compared to tribal girls, with a significant difference in Arts and Science streams. This paper mentions the role of social and cultural heritage in the development of life skills and identifies the disparities that could be addressed with the help of education.

Balhara and Rajkumari (2023) researched life skills as a measure of self-esteem among higher secondary school students. Their sample population was 100 students from government schools. It revealed that there was a positive correlation between self-esteem and life skills. It implies that students who had superior life skills were more inclined to possess greater self-esteem. This is significant due to the fact that self-esteem influences participation, confidence, motivation and adjustment.

Major Findings from the Review

The studied literature shows that there exist close relationships between life skills and key psychological dimensions among students of higher secondary schools. Goswami (2019) paid attention to self-awareness and found self-regulation to be an issue that differs significantly among school types. Devi et al. (2024) identified a positive correlation between self-concept and life skills, whereas Balhara and Rajkumari (2023) indicated a positive correlation between self-esteem and life skills. Collectively, these studies indicate that life skills are not solely outward behavioural skills; they also relate to the way students conceptualise, judge and manage themselves.

The other significant trend that has been created by the review is the correlation between life skills and academic performance. A study of senior secondary students revealed a significant and positive correlation between life skills and school performance, which could suggest a positive role of psychosocial competencies in enhancing school performance (Bala et al., 2024). The educational significance of this relationship is that a student able to deal with stress, think well, communicate efficiently, and make good decisions tends to be better equipped to stay focused, well organised, and undeterred in studying.

Gender-related patterns are also mentioned in the review, but not all studies have exactly the same patterns. Vemula and Lalramthari (2024) talk about life skills awareness by getting into several competencies like communication, time management, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving and point out that life skills are not a single competency, but multi-dimensional. Bala et al. (2024) have discovered that boys were relatively higher in life skills, and girls were higher in academics. These observations imply that gender might have effects on the manifestation of certain dimensions of life skills, but the results are only to be carefully interpreted and not broadly generalised.

Life skills also seem to be affected by the school environment and social background. Goswami (2019) reviewed higher secondary pupils within the school setting specifically, whereas Samant and Joshi (2025) compared tribal and non-tribal senior secondary girls, which suggests that the effect that the social and educational setting has on the research of life skills continues to present an essential aspect in the disclosure of this domain. These trends suggest that support, exposure, opportunity and the educational contexts are potential influences on the growth of life skills in adolescents.

Meanwhile, the review indicates that one background factor alone is insufficient to explain life skills. Certain studies characterise the variation by school type, gender, or social group, whilst others indicate minimal or conflicting variation by category. It means that the process of developing life competence is complicated and depends on the combination of various personal, academic and social factors.

Discussion

The results of the analysed literature determine life skills as one of the urgent issues of higher secondary education. The good and positive interconnections among the life skills with the self related variables like self-awareness, self-concept, as well as self esteem proves how life skills will develop a good personality. With a sense of personal feelings, a belief in personal ability, and confidence, a student is better equipped to be an effective communicator, problem solver, stress coping, and make the right decisions (Goswami, 2019). Life skills and academic achievement are particularly interesting with regard to education. The intellectual quality of teaching, or study practices, is frequently perceived as a determinant of academic success, home support, or, as the reviewed studies have pointed out, psychosocial competencies can also become an issue. Time management, emotional suitability, critical thinking, and motivation issues are features of effective, healthy time management, enabling a student to perform well in school. This means that life skills education cannot be regarded as a supplementary activity but as a learning activity (Bala et al., 2024). The difference in genders expressed in certain studies has to be interpreted carefully. The more advanced scores of boys in some dimensions of life skills can be associated with the patterns of socialisation, the chance to express themselves or the level of confidence. Meanwhile, the higher academic performance of girls is another indicator of the fact that the performance of children and their skills in life are not necessarily moving in the same direction. This implies that both boys and girls must receive an equal amount of support in schools and avoid generalisations about ability (Vemula and Lalramthari, 2024). According to the variation according to the type of the school, tribal identity and the academic stream, life skills turn out to be dependent on social and

educational conditions. The underprivileged students might lack access to leadership opportunities, experience in communicating, exposure, and building confidence. Consequently, the development of life skills can indicate larger disparities within society. This requires special interventions, particularly in respect to students who belong to discriminated groups (Goswami, 2019; Samant and Joshi, 2025).

The other critical issue that arises during the review is that life skills are multidimensional. There were studies on self-awareness, communication, etc. and one on general skills in life. It implies that life skills must be perceived in terms of overall competencies that are not independent of each other, instead of one trait. School programs must therefore work with emotional, cognitive, social and behavioural dimensions simultaneously (Vemula & Lalramthari, 2024).

The studies also indicate the necessity of an increased level of systematic training in life skills in schools. Training, awareness, or inclusion in the curriculum is suggested in the majority of studies. This is understandable since life skills cannot always be acquired automatically. Some students might acquire them either through family support or exposure in society, but other students might have to be provided with a chance in the classroom. These skills can be reinforced by using activities like group discussion, role play, problem solving, peer learning, reflective writing and counselling support.

Educational Implications

The review has a number of implications for educational practice. The teaching of life skills in the higher secondary curriculum should be done both formally and informally. It is necessary to train teachers to involve communication, critical thinking, emotional control, and choice in the routine classroom instruction. Schools must organise workshops on life skills, mentorship, and extra-curricular activities that help to boost confidence, collaboration, and self-awareness. The disadvantaged or underrepresented students should be given special attention. Student development should no longer be judged using academic marks. Schools are also supposed to monitor behavioural development, relationship competence, leadership, as well as emotional self-regulation. The self-concept and self-esteem that are positively related to life skills can be enhanced by counselling and mentorship programs for students.

Conclusion

This theoretical review highlights that life skills are a crucial component of higher secondary education, closely linked with self-awareness, self-concept, self-esteem, academic achievement, gender, school type, and social background. Positive relationships between life skills and self-esteem, self-concept, and academic performance indicate their significant role in both personal and educational development. At the same time, differences across social and school contexts emphasise the need for more inclusive and equitable educational support. The review argues that life skills education should be treated as central, not secondary, to academic learning. By integrating life skills into curriculum, pedagogy, and student support systems, schools can nurture well-rounded individuals who are emotionally resilient, socially aware, and better prepared to face real-life challenges alongside achieving academic success.

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