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## Assessment of life skills among secondary school students of district Nainital, Uttarakhand India

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### Abstract

**Background:** Any beneficial skills in our daily life can be considered as life skills. Various situation *viz.* choosing friends, selecting subjects, interacting with others and understanding own emotions etc. requires life skills. Life skills impart and enhance productivity, social relations and self-confidence of secondary school students.

**Aim:** The present study aims to assess the level of life skills among secondary school students.

**Method:** Self-standardized life skills questionnaire was used to collect data from randomly selected 800 government secondary school students of district Nainital, Uttarakhand. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 25.

**Results:** Our study revealed that secondary school students of district Nainital, Uttarakhand possesses average life skills scores. No significance difference exist among school students w.r.t. gender and age. Significant difference was found w.r.t. locality. Students from hilly areas possess better life skills as compared to students of bhabhar areas.

**Conclusion:** We propose that inoculation of life skills in secondary school students of district Nainital, Uttarakhand, is a collective duty of parent, teachers, policy makers and government.

**Keywords:** Life skills, secondary school students, gender, age, locality

### 1. Introduction

Secondary school students are generally in the age of adolescence, which means to spring up or accomplish selfhood. World Health Organization (WHO) demarcated second decade of secondary school student's life i.e. 10 to 19 years age, as adolescence period. 243 million Indians belong to this age group, comprising nearly 90% of total world's adolescents (Borah *et al.*, 2020) [2]. At this critical transition phase, they have boundless vigor and animation; they commence adulthood by replacing childhood attitudes and encounter remarkable physical, biological, psychological and behavioral changes in them. Most of them at this age don't have firm conscience; usually come across problems and emotional turbulence related to relationship with parents and peers. They generally dislike interference & suggestions of their custodians and normally cultivate independent ideology. In this crucial stage of transformation, inquisitive and experimental conduct among students is very obvious, if their apprehensions are not judiciously guided and timely tackled. They may suffers with innumerable maladaptive behavior which will exaggerate likelihood of troubles in their life. Many researchers highlighted devastating and vulnerable consequences of ignorant approach at this change over age *viz.* poor academic achievements, unhealthy eating habits, addictive conduct, meagre physical and mental health, reduced working capability, intensified anarchic attitude, promptness for suicidal ideation, development of violent propensities and criminal outlook (Vranda and Rao, 2011) [20].

Secondary school student's scarcely inherent skills to knob ebb and flow in life, they acquire and espouse skills through highs and lows in their life. Life skills is an umbrella term which includes constructive skills that supports students in all arena of their life. Without life skills, a student can't compete in today's fast-paced and cutthroat competitive world.

Life skills can alter one's brain structure and way of operating. It boosts one's self-esteem and aids in behavior pattern analysis. It facilitate them to flourish in the environs they live; help to retort their multifarious snag; offers thoughtfulness to handle and face challenges and steeplechases; aid to achieve self-succor to live life boldly, happily and efficaciously.

Many researchers accentuated significance and inevitabilities of life skills in students life, these skills aids their comprehensive and holistic development; heighten their positive social

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relations; reinforce them to become confident in all aspects; support to make conversant verdicts to evolve as dynamic humanities of tomorrow; empower them to endorse and defend their rights; comprehend their needs, emotions & strengthen their temperaments; expand their abilities to deal and bounce back from difficult time etc. So it is important to make strategies for imparting good life skills among students (Pandey and Pandey, 2024) [14].

Cultural milieu, anthropological profiles, value system and beliefs all contributing in the development of life skills. Life skills deeply fluctuate as a function of age, sexual characteristics and ethnicity (Kaur, 2014) [8]. Uttarakhand possess an exceedingly diverse landscape, due to its unique geographical topographies, we conducted a study to assess the level of life skills among government secondary school from four blocks of Nainital district, Uttarakhand, India.

## 2. Method

In the present study a descriptive survey design was adopted, socio-demographic data comprised of 800 randomly selected government secondary school students, 400 (50%) male and 400 (50%) females. 200 (25%) students were included each from four different blocks viz. Haldwani, Kotabag, Bhimtal and Ramgarh towns of Nainital district, Uttarakhand India. Along with socio-demographic data, life skills assessment data was also simultaneously collected through self-standardized life skills questionnaire based on conceptual framework of WHO. Life skills assessment questionnaire consist of 58 items in seven dimensions viz. critical thinking (CT), creative thinking (CRT), decision making and problem solving (DM & PS), interpersonal and communication skills (IPR & C), empathy (E), self-awareness (SA) and stress management (SM). Each items have binary options, YES and NO, one of them being the correct answer and the other being incorrect. A correct answer (Yes) was coded as 1 and incorrect answer (No) as 0 for positive nature item, while negative nature item was coded as 1 (NO) for correct response and 0 (YES) for incorrect responses. Thus, maximum possible score of the test was 58 and minimum of 0.

The reliability of life skills assessment questionnaire was 0.80. Face validity, content validity and parallel validity was established. Parallel validity was measured by the correlation analysis of questionnaire with standardized life skills scale developed by Dr. Rena Tewari Assistant. Prof., Matagujai Mahavidyalaya, Jabalpur. Obtained Correlation coefficient was 0.578 which is significant at 0.05 level of significance. All data analysis work was done using appropriate statistical test through SPSS version 25. Independent t-test was used to determine significance difference in mean value of two groups. The p-value <0.05 was considered as cut off value for significance.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Level of life skills among secondary school students

The frequency distribution of total life skills scores showed normal distribution, 94% respondent had average life skills, 2.3% of respondent had low life skills and 3.0% respondent had high life skills (Table 1). It was also observed that five dimensions of life skills viz. CT, CRT, DM & PS, IPR & C and SA, maximum respondent showed average life skills, while two life skill dimensions viz. E and SM, 383 and 530 respondents were having high life skills, respectively. We also witnessed that for all seven dimension of life skills, low

life skills respondent were least, least minimum 3.5% for IPR & C skills and least maximum 7.25% for SM. Present study clearly indicates that the students possesses moderate level of life skills (Table 1). Results of our study were similar with research findings of Vidya *et al.*, (2016) [19], Chakara (2016) [3-4], Mathew and Jose (2018) [11], Antara *et al.*, (2019) [1], Dey *et al.*, (2022) [6], and Raju & Rao (2022) [16] reflecting moderate level of life skills among the students.

### 3.2 Difference in life skills among secondary school students with respect to their gender

Gender (male and female) comparison of total life skills among secondary school students displayed higher mean value  $39.49 \pm 8.00$  for females compared to males mean value  $38.35 \pm 8.82$ ; calculated t- value and P value -1.907 and 0.057, respectively, were found non-significant at 0.05 level of significance. Dimension wise comparison of life skill evinced that significant difference exists only in DM & PS and E domain ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Table 2)

The results of present study are in accordance to Lalhriatpuri *et al.*, (2020) [10]. They reported that female secondary school students possess better problem solving skills and empathy than their equivalent male secondary school students, they also didn't observe any significant difference for total life skills among male and female government secondary school students. In a remarkable study conducted by Antara *et al.*, (2019) [1] also concluded no significant gender differences in interpersonal relationship, communication skills critical thinking, creative thinking, coping with emotions and coping with stress, dimensions of life skills. Similar to our results many other researcher eg. Mathew and Joes (2018) [11], Chakara (2016) [3-4], Prakash and Devi (2015) [13], Chavda and Trivedi (2015) [5], Raju & Rao (2022) [16] also asserted no significant effect of gender in life skills development. In contrast to our results, significant gender differences among secondary school students was noticed in work conducted by Dey *et al.*, (2022) [6], Rani and Neeraj (2020) [15], Sijimol, S (2014) [17] and Kaur (2014) [8].

### 3.3 Difference in life skills among government secondary school students with respect to their age (12-14 years and 15-17 years)

Results explicate that no significant difference exists between total life skills among two age-groups of government secondary school students i.e. 12-14 years and 15-17 years. Out of seven evaluated dimensions of life skills, only one dimension i.e. CRT showed significant difference between life skills of the two age groups of students ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Table 3).

In contrast to our results, Antara, *et al.*, (2019) [1] observed that among two age groups i.e. 12-15 year and 16 to 19 years, a significant difference exist for dimensions viz. self-awareness, empathy, interpersonal relationship and decision making as well as for total life skills. They concluded that on maturity students improves their life skills abilities. Dhingra and Chauhan (2017) also investigated level of life skills among two age groups of secondary school students i.e. 14-15 years and 15 -16 years and they observed that significant differences exist in life skills between these two groups. Similarly, Chavda and Trivedi (2014) [5] studied level of life skills among three age groups i.e. 11- 13 years, 14-17 years and 18-20 years and they found significant

difference in levels of life skills between 11-13 year and 14-17 years and 11-13 years and 18-20 years. Interestingly no significant difference was depicted between 14-17 years and 18 -20 years. They concluded that age and maturity are major factor that affects life skills development.

**3.4 Difference in life skills among government secondary school students with respect to locality**

Comparison of life skills among government secondary school students w.r.t. locality demonstrates that, mean value of secondary school students from hilly areas was higher in comparison to mean value of government secondary school students from bhabhar areas. The calculated total life skills mean values for hilly areas and bhabhar areas were 39.67±8.36 and 38.17± 8.45, respectively. A significant difference exists for total life skills of two locality, observed t- value and p value were 2.525 and 0.012, respectively. (Table 4)

Out of seven assessed dimensions of life skills, mean value for CT and E of government secondary school student belonging to hilly areas was 6.96 and 5.31, respectively. Mean value for CT and E of secondary school students belonging to bhabhar areas was 6.57 and 4.93, respectively. A significant difference among hilly and bhabhar areas was also observed for CT and E of government secondary school student (p value<0.005), other life skills dimensions didn't show any significant difference (p value>0.005).

Results of our investigation are similar to findings of Kaur (2014) [8], where she also reported that locality urban and rural areas had significant impact on their life skills development of secondary students. Sijimol (2014) [17], Mathew and Jose (2018) [11] also found a significant difference in life skills of secondary school students with respect to their locality. In contrast to our results Dey *et al.*, (2022) [6] didn't observed any significant difference in life skills of secondary school based on locality.

**Table 1:** Level of life skills scores among secondary school students (N=800)

S.no.	Life skills	High	Average	Low
1.	<b>Critical Thinking</b>			
	a. Range	8-9	4-7	0-3
	b. Number of respondent	307	463	30
	c. Percentage (%)	38.4	57.87	3.75
2.	<b>Creative thinking</b>			
	a. Range	6-7	3-5	0-2
	b. Number of respondent	217	333	50
	c. Percentage (%)	27.12	41.62	6.25
3.	<b>Decision making and Problem Solving Skills</b>			
	a. Range	11-13	5-10	0-4
	b. Number of respondent	159	602	39
	c. Percentage (%)	19.87	75.24	4.8
4.	<b>Interpersonal Relationship and Communication Skills</b>			
	a. Range	5-7	2-4	0-1
	b. Number of respondent	365	407	28
	c. Percentage (%)	45.62	50.87	3.5
5.	<b>Empathy</b>			
	a. Range	5-7	3-4	0-2
	b. Number of respondent	383	379	38
	c. Percentage (%)	48.12	47.37	4.75
6.	<b>Self- Awareness</b>			
	a. Range	6-8	3-5	0-2
	b. Number of respondent	348	410	42
	c. Percentage (%)	43.5	51.25	5.25
7.	<b>Stress Management</b>			
	a. Range	5-7	2-4	0-1
	b. Number of respondent	430	312	58
	c. Percentage (%)	53.75	39.0	7.25
8.	<b>Total Life Skills</b>			
	a. Range	54-58	24-53	0-23
	b. Number of respondent	24	757	19
	c. Percentage (%)	3.0	94.6	2.3

**Table 2:** Difference in life skills among secondary school students with respect to gender (male and female)

Life skills	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value	P value
Critical Thinking	Male	6.67	1.74	-1.588	0.113
	Female	6.86	1.64		
Creative Thinking	Male	4.61	1.33	-0.692	0.489
	Female	4.68	1.33		
Decision Making and Problem solving skills	Male	8.18	2.42	-2.012	0.045
	Female	8.51	2.22		
Interpersonal Relationship and Communication Skills	Male	4.27	1.51	-1.587	0.113
	Female	4.45	1.61		
Empathy	Male	4.94	1.54	-3.328	0.001
	Female	5.29	1.48		

Self-Awareness	Male	5.24	1.76	0.982	0.326
	Female	5.12	1.62		
Stress Management	Male	4.45	1.90	-1.096	0.273
	Female	4.58	1.63		
Total Life Skills	Male	38.35	8.82	-1.907	0.057
	Female	39.49	8.00		

**Table 3:** Difference in life skills among secondary school students with respect to age groups (12-14years and 15-17 years)

Life skills	Age Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value	P value
Critical Thinking	12 - 14 Years	344	6.80	1.65	0.541	0.589
	15 - 17 Years	456	6.74	1.73		
Creative Thinking	12 - 14 Years	344	4.76	1.33	2.055	0.040
	15 - 17 Years	456	4.56	1.32		
Decision Making and Problem solving skills	12 - 14 Years	344	8.42	2.33	0.892	0.372
	15 - 17 Years	456	8.28	2.32		
Interpersonal Relationship and Communication Skills	12 - 14 Years	344	4.42	1.64	0.961	0.337
	15 - 17 Years	456	4.31	1.50		
Empathy	12 - 14 Years	344	5.22	1.51	1.622	0.105
	15 - 17 Years	456	5.04	1.52		
Self-Awareness	12 - 14 Years	344	5.22	1.75	0.618	0.537
	15 - 17 Years	456	5.15	1.65		
Stress Management	12 - 14 Years	344	4.61	1.72	1.340	0.181
	15 - 17 Years	456	4.44	1.81		
Total Life Skill Score	12 - 14 Years	344	39.45	8.44	1.555	0.120
	15 - 17 Years	456	38.52	8.41		

**Table 4:** Difference in life skills among secondary school students with respect to locality (Hilly and Bhabhar)

Life skill dimensions	Area	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value	p value
Critical Thinking	Hilly area	6.96	1.60	3.319	0.001
	Bhabhar area	6.57	1.76		
Creative Thinking	Hilly area	4.69	1.32	0.959	0.338
	Bhabhar area	4.60	1.33		
Decision Making and Problem solving skills	Hilly area	8.43	2.32	1.065	0.287
	Bhabhar area	8.25	2.33		
Interpersonal Relationship and Communication Skills	Hilly area	4.40	1.56	0.724	0.469
	Bhabhar area	4.32	1.56		
Empathy	Hilly area	5.31	1.46	3.566	0.000
	Bhabhar area	4.93	1.55		
Self-Awareness	Hilly area	5.28	1.68	1.653	0.099
	Bhabhar area	5.08	1.70		
Stress Management	Hilly area	4.61	1.78	1.456	0.146
	Bhabhar area	4.42	1.76		
Total Life Skills	Hilly area	39.67	8.36	2.525	0.012
	Bhabhar area	38.17	8.45		

**4. Conclusion**

Result of present study showed that government secondary school students possess moderate level of life skills. With respect to gender of secondary school students, we noticed no significant difference in total life skills, but DM & PS and E dimensions showed significant difference. The reason for our observation could be, in today’s contemporary world, parents don’t discriminate between boys and girls, for holistic maturation they provide identical and equal opportunities to both gender. Rationale behind our finding is that female students are more empathetic and possess better problem solving and decision making ability, which generally is an imposing behavioral trait of girls. They are more mature, docile, obedient, focused and self-adjusting by nature. They are attentive and pay more observance to the specific directives. They enthusiastically take part in all scholastic and co-curricular activities as compared to boys of their same age groups.

Our findings also indicated that no significant difference exists for total life skills scores among age groups of

government secondary school students. Although our findings contradict with the observations of many other researcher’s, we believe that the reason behind it may be that we have taken one year age group difference in our experimental study which might not be sufficient to observe significant changes. In our opinion, acquisition of life skills is a continuous & gradual process, drastic changes in them within such a short period can’t be manifested. Findings of our study establishes that government secondary school students have average level of life skills, higher age group 15-17 years showed lower mean value of life skills, we advocate that there is special urge of life skills training programs for these students.

We observed that locales of students has significant impact on life skills development, our results clearly depicts significantly higher life skills in hilly government secondary school students in comparison to government secondary school students of bhabhar area. It could be concluded that every day challenging lifestyle of hilly areas government secondary school students may be helpful for them to



become more rational, patient, and adjusting. Serene Environment in hilly regions, cooperative societal behavior and strong bonding among families, enable natural development and benefits these students to enhance sense of empathetic life skills.

Based on our research observation, we propose that providing effective learning atmosphere and inoculation of life skills in government secondary school students is a collective duty of parents, teachers, policy makers and government. Life skills training modules for students and teachers should be developed and effectively executed to produce better human resources for future.

### 5. Limitations

The present study was limited with government secondary schools students of hilly and bhabhar region of district Nainital, Uttarakhand, India. The study may need to further extend to private schools and rural /urban locality to make the result more globalizable.

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