



LIFE SKILLS AMONG THE YOUNG ADULTS: A SURVEY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Life skills are regarded as the essential abilities that are helpful in promoting mental well-being, quality of life and psychosocial competence in individuals especially for young adults, i.e. undergraduate students as they encounter harsh realities of life. It consists of a large group of psychosocial and interpersonal skills which can help people to take appropriate decisions, communicate effectively and develop coping and stress management skills that fosters the individual's knowledge with analytical skills and logical reasoning. The major objective of the present study is to analyse the prevalent status of Life skills among the undergraduate students with respect to their gender and academic stream. The researcher employed a cross-sectional survey design for conducting the present study. A sample size comprised of 100 (50 male & 50 female) undergraduate students of Kolkata, West Bengal were selected using simple random sampling technique. The data were collected by implementing M.N.Vranda Life skill scale tool. Descriptive method was implemented to analyse the raw data. For inferential Statistics Independent Sample T-test and ANOVA were computed to analyse the mean difference statistically. The findings of the study revealed that there exists a significant difference in life skills among students with respect to students' gender and stream of study. After critically analyzing the result it emerged that the education authorities are required to take more active steps towards Life skills education. Hence, there is an immediate need to inculcate Life skills education as an integral part of the curriculum as it helps the young adults to avoid different risk taking behaviours.



KEY WORD: Life skills, gender, academic stream and undergraduate students.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the present era of globalization and information technology education has been acclaimed as the most important integral part of every society. For every nations economic, social and cultural growth education act like a driving factor. Therefore the Educational system and policies should be framed in such a way where all round development of each and every individual of the society is possible. For fulfilling this objective a worldwide initiative has been taken to develop Life Skills Education by various national and international organizations. According to WHO "Life Skills are the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life". The definition lead by WHO is the most acceptable one as it clearly defines that individuals should be flexible in their behaviour as it will help them to adjust and cope in adverse situations and circumstances of life and by positive behavior means that the individuals should be forward looking and goal oriented.

Life skills are also regarded as the psychosocial competence for promoting and maintaining a state of mental well being. Life skills enables individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual

abilities –i.e. ‘what to do and how to do it’ (WHO). International organizations like WHO, UNICEF, UNNESCO and UNFPA viewed that Life skills education can be applied in various sectors of individual’s health and social related events like taking healthy choices or maintaining intrapersonal relationships. The ten core Life skills laid down by WHO are decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, empathy, coping with emotions and coping with stress.

LIFE SKILLS AND YOUNG ADULT STUDENTS

The young adults are regarded as the most precious and productive individuals of every nations. Life of young students is always aimed for all-round intellectual, physical, social and mental growth as it will help them to develop a socially acceptable and desirable behavior, positive attitudes and values. But in this present dynamic society the young aspirants have to accustomed themselves as disciplined, intelligent and hard working to meet the expectations of their parents and teachers which causes erosion to their creativity and thinking making them disempowered. Their life is full of don’ts than do’s, They have abide certain standard rules and regulations. The other issues and problem the young adults encountered are unemployment, poverty, lack of job security and not getting job according to their calibre and capability, unhealthy competition, social, emotional and other psychological issues. Due to all these complex situations they bring themselves in the verge of uncertainties which act like a stress creating factors for them. And also when their psychological and social needs are not fulfilled the vulnerability to put themselves in various unhealthy practices and risk taking behaviours increases like alcoholism, according to the World Health Survey –India reported that individuals aged 18 to 24 years found 3.9 percent were infrequent heavy drinkers and 0.6 percent were frequent heavy drinkers, use of tobacco, misuse of psychoactive substances, teenage pregnancy as per WHO study 11% of all births worldwide are girls aged between 15-19 years, HIV/AIDS, self- destructive behaviours, violence and juvenile delinquency. These entire socially unaccepted behaviours acts like a catalyst to manifest them to become a maladjustment personality. In comparison of male the females are the most sufferers in every aspects of their developmental process. It is one of the aims of Life skills education to eradicate gender inequality present in this modern patriarchal society and women empowerment is the only way to eradicate this gender biasness present in the society since past ancient years. Equal treatment must be provided to both the sexes as both are the integral part of the society. Women should have the equal right in saying and participate in economic, social, political and in decision making processes. To meet all these challenges Life skills education is utmost needed to make the young minds emotionally and mentally fit.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The present study was supported by various others researchers and educational practitioners research works to promote the effectiveness of Life skills.

Aparna, N & Rakhee. A, S. (2011) the researcher in their article discusses that life skills facilitates a complete and integrated development of Individuals to function effectively as a social beings.

Yadav, P. & Yadav, N. (2009) in their research study investigated the impact of life skill training on adolescents and made an attempt to understand the effectiveness of life skill approach on adolescents self-esteem, adjustment level and empathy. The researcher took sample comprised of 60 students and tool used for data collection were Self-esteem inventory (Adult form), Adjustment inventory for school students and Empathy questionnaire by Cohen and Wheel Wright was used. The result depicted that there was a significant difference between the pre test and post test condition on self-esteem, emotional, educational, total adjustment and empathy. The significant difference was observed between all the pairs at 0.01 level of significance.

Dr. Dixit, D .Kr. & Dr. Ahmed, M. S. (2013) analyzed the need for reorganize of the education systems across the Globe so that they provide not only high standard of academic qualification but also

important life skills which are now very much necessary for employers and other members in the global society.

Monteiro, S., Pereira, A., & Sarmiento, M. (2015) in their research work tried to investigate the differences between a clinical group and a nonclinical group of students in higher education with regard to risk behaviours (use of alcohol and other drugs, and sexual risk behaviours) and psychopathology. A clinical sample of 73 participants and a nonclinical sample of 78 participants were evaluated through the Risk Behaviours Questionnaire for University Students and the Brief Symptom Inventory. t-test and chi-square tests revealed that comparisons between groups showed that higher education students who are receiving psychological and/or psychiatric help showed more sexual risk behaviours and psychopathological symptoms than the nonclinical sample. However it was found that a considerable percentage of students belonging the nonclinical sample were emotionally disturbed.

Sharma, P. & Kirmani, M. N. (2013) revealed higher rate of depression and anxiety among female students, professional students report higher level of depression and anxiety than nonprofessional students. Also found that girls reported more symptoms of depression and anxiety in comparison of boys. They suggested that the colleges and the Universities need to set up mental health clinics and employ trained mental health counsellors and clinical psychologists to cater the emerging mental health needs of the students.

Schultz, C. M. & Chweu, M .G.(2012) asserted that Life Skills program help students to know themselves better, take conscious decision about their lives and to attain personal and academic goals.

Fallahchai, R. (2012) in their investigation proved that Knowledge of suitable life skills would provide an opportunity for individuals to act normally in their daily life and effortlessly and positively conform to social environment and culture when dealing with other people. In addition, life skills would help individuals boost their level of adaptability and psychological capacity.

Singh, H. & Dr. Gera, M.(2015)suggested that the teaching of life skills should be coupled with other teachings of hygiene, health, environment and promotion of positive attitudes and values. To fulfill the suggestions the researcher recommended that the school curriculum must be enriched with effective Life Skills programs.

Bardhan, A. (2016) made an attempt to understand the impact of various life skills interventions in developing positive behavior among the adolescents. The result of the study proved that life skills intervention has helped in developing mental wellbeing of the adolescents and helped them to lead a normal and healthy life free from depression, alcoholism, violence and other psychosocial problems.

Muthulakshmi, R., & Pamela, A.A.J. (2016) conducted a research study and investigated experimentally the effectiveness of life skills training on academic achievement and achievement in genetics among eleventh standard students. 64 Government school students from Chennai were selected randomly and applied self-prepared Modules on Genetics based on Life Skills to develop life skill and Achievement test in genetics for measure. Results revealed that the students who were in experimental group have scored higher level of achievement in genetics and academic achievement than the students who were in control group. It may be concluded Life skills training are a participatory process which makes active learning, enthusiastic participation and metacognitive ability among the learners for their academic performance and achievement.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The major objective of the present study was to find out and analyze the prevalent rate of life skills among the undergraduate students of West Bengal with regard to their gender and Academic stream i.e. science, commerce and arts.

VARIABLES:

Variables under present study are as follows:

Independent Variables:

1. **Gender:** Gender was one of the classificatory Independent variable of the study. The two dimensions i.e., Male and female were considered as Gender Variable.

2. **Academic streams:** Stream was taken as another Independent variable of the study which was further classified into Science, Commerce and Arts

Dependent Variables: In the present study, Life Skills prevalence among the undergraduate students was taken as the Dependent variable. Life skills and its five factors, i.e. problem solving, empathy, Effective Communication, Coping with Stress and Critical Thinking Skills) were selected as dependent Variable.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY:

H₀1: There is no significant difference in life skills (i.e. problem solving, empathy, Effective Communication, Coping with Stress, Critical Thinking and overall life skills) of the undergraduate students with respect to gender (male & female).

H₀2: There is no significant difference in life skills (i.e. problem solving, empathy, Effective Communication, Coping with Stress, Critical Thinking and overall life skills) of the undergraduate students with respect to their academic stream (Science, Commerce & Arts).

METHOD AND PROCEDURE:

For this study the researcher used cross- sectional survey research technique and for selecting the required sample size simple random sampling method was employed. The sample size comprised of 100 (50 male and 50 female) undergraduate students of kolkata affiliated to the government aided colleges of the state West Bengal. The researcher used Life skills scale by M.N.VRANDA, NIMHAS for the collection of relevant raw data as it is regarded to be the popular and user friendly questionnaire. The questionnaire implemented in the present study was adopted and modified from the original Life Skills Scale which was comprised of 10 dimensions of life skill and the total numbers of items are 115. From 10 dimensions the researcher purposely selected 5 dimensions of life skills which consisted of 54 items. The adopted 5 Life Skills under study are Problem Solving, Empathy, Effective Communication Skills, Coping with stress and Critical Thinking skill. The whole process of adoption and modification of the questionnaire was executed under the guidance and opinion of the research experts. The total number of items in the questionnaire is 54 and was measured in 5 point Likert scale on 1(Never) to 5(Always). Thus the minimum possible score is 54 and maximum possible score is 270. At first the researcher took prior permission from randomly selected five co-educational college authorities to collect the required information from the concerned samples. As per the scheduled date the questionnaire and self made demographic information schedule was framed and administered by the researchers.

Table 1: Nature of the sample under study

Sample	Category	N=100 (Percentage of sample)
Gender	Male	50 (50%)
	Female	50 (50%)
Academic Stream	Science	33 (33%)
	Commerce	34 (34%)
	Arts	33 (34%)

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

For analyzing the raw date the researcher computed Mean and Standard deviation for descriptive statistics and for inferential independent sample t- test and one- way ANOVA were computed. The whole process of statistical analysis was employed using Statistical package of social sciences (SPSS), version 20.

Table 2. Independent sample t-test of Life Skills scores with respect to Gender (Male & Female).

Life Skills	Gender	Mean	S.D	"t" values	df	P values
Problem Solving	Male	45.12	9.222	1.880	98	.063
	Female	42.06	6.882			
Empathy	Male	43.58	7.640	2.645	98	.010**
	Female	39.58	7.484			
Effective Communication	Male	36.68	6.412	1.172	98	.244
	Female	35.44	3.855			
Coping With Stress	Male	32.54	3.710	2.488	98	.015*
	Female	30.52	4.381			
Critical Thinking	Male	36.16	5.622	1.685	98	.095
	Female	34.26	5.653			
Overall Life Skills	Male	194.08	18.963	3.513	98	.001**
	Female	181.88	15.606			

** Significant at 0.01% level, * significant at 0.05% level

There was significant mean difference (*table 2*) with respect to gender (male & female) in overall life skills, $t(98) = 3.513$, $p = .001$, and the mean score of male students ($M = 194.08$, $SD = 3.51$) was found significantly higher than female students ($M = 181.88$, $SD = 15.60$). Also significant differences were found in two of its factors, Empathy, $t(98) = 2.645$, $p = .01$ and coping with stress, $t(98) = 2.488$, $P = .015$ and in Empathy skills mean score of male students ($M = 43.58$, $S.D = 7.64$) was significantly higher than female students ($M = 39.58$, $S.D = 7.48$) and also in Coping with stress skills mean score of male students was higher ($M = 32.54$, $S.D = 3.71$) in compare to female students ($M = 30.52$, $S.D = 4.38$). Therefore, **the null hypothesis is rejected at 0.01% level of significance** and it can be concluded that there were significant different in overall life skills and two of its factor, i.e. empathy and coping with stress of the students with respect to gender (male & female)

The results also revealed that three of the life skills factors were not significantly different with respect to gender (male & female), i.e., Problem Solving Skill, $t(98) = 1.880$, $p = .063$; Effective Communication Skill, $t(98) = 1.172$, $p = 0.244$; and Critical Thinking Skill, $t(98) = 1.685$, $p = .095$.

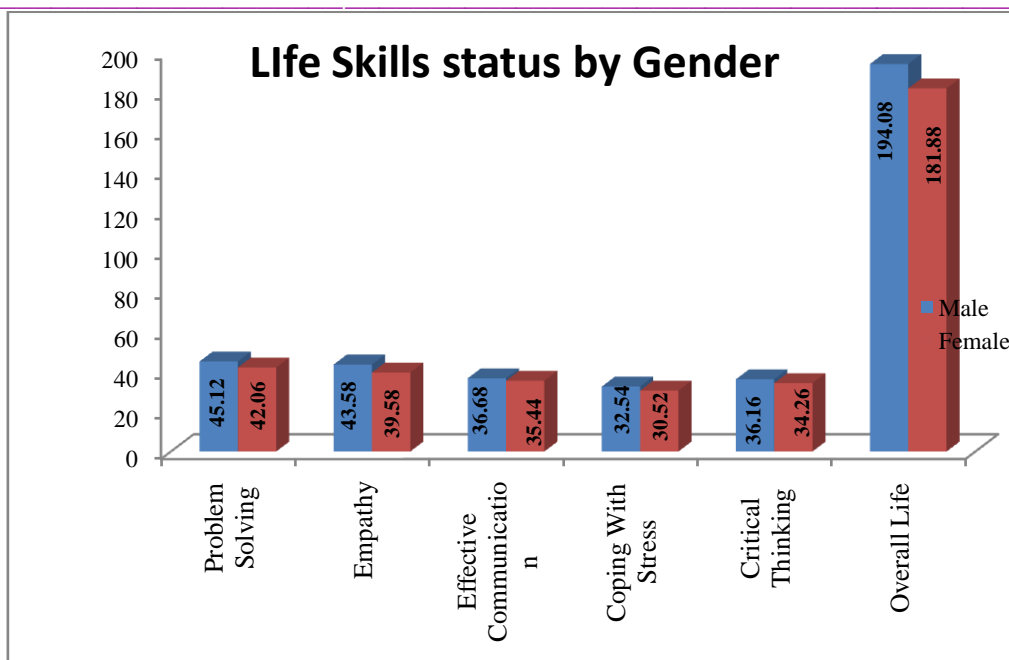


Figure 1. Graphical representation of Life skills scores with respect to gender (male & female)

From the above fig.1, it can be clearly observed that the overall mean scores of male students were quite higher than the female students and even in all the five dimensions of Life skills under study the male students got higher scores as compared to female students. Therefore, it can be concluded that the male students possess more life skills than the female students.

Table 4: Mean and Std. Deviation of Life Skills scores with respect to Academic Stream (Science, commerce & arts).

Life Skills		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
PROBLEM SOLVING	SCIENCE	33	44.94	8.948
	COMMERCE	34	40.85	8.173
	ARTS	33	45.06	7.004
	Total	100	43.59	8.240
EMPATHY	SCIENCE	33	41.94	9.874
	COMMERCE	34	40.18	6.758
	ARTS	33	42.67	6.293
	Total	100	41.58	7.788
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION	SCIENCE	33	37.91	4.882
	COMMERCE	34	34.35	5.336
	ARTS	33	35.97	5.205
	Total	100	36.06	5.301
COPING WITH STRESS	SCIENCE	33	32.06	4.423
	COMMERCE	34	31.35	4.119
	ARTS	33	31.18	4.019
	Total	100	31.53	4.164
CRITICAL THINKING	SCIENCE	33	36.12	5.899
	COMMERCE	34	33.97	4.963

OVERALL LIFE SKILLS	ARTS	33	35.58	6.109
	Total	100	35.21	5.689
	SCIENCE	33	192.97	21.223
	COMMERCE	34	180.71	11.767
	ARTS	33	190.45	18.942
	Total	100	187.97	18.337

Table 3. One-way Anova of Life Skills scores with respect to Academic Stream (Science, commerce & arts).

Life Skills		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	η^2
Problem Solving	Between Groups	386.168	2	193.084	2.956	.057*	.057
	Within Groups	6336.022	97	65.320			
	Total	6722.190	99				
Empathy	Between Groups	110.207	2	55.103	.907	.407	.018
	Within Groups	5894.153	97	60.764			
	Total	6004.360	99				
Effective Communication	Between Groups	212.178	2	106.089	4.005	.021*	.076
	Within Groups	2569.462	97	26.489			
	Total	2781.640	99				
Coping With Stress	Between Groups	14.357	2	7.179	.409	.665	.008
	Within Groups	1702.553	97	17.552			
	Total	1716.910	99				
Critical Thinking	Between Groups	84.044	2	42.022	1.306	.276	.026
	Within Groups	3120.546	97	32.171			
	Total	3204.590	99				
Overall Life Skills	Between Groups	2822.700	2	1411.350	4.494	.014**	.085
	Within Groups	30464.210	97	314.064			
	Total	33286.910	99				

** significant at 0.01% level, * significant at 0.05% level

Table 3 shows that, there was a significant difference with respect to students Academic stream (science, commerce and arts) in overall life skills, $F(2,97) = 4.494$, $p = 0.014$, $\eta^2 = .085$, which indicates a medium effect size and approx 9% variance was noted in overall Life skills for Academic stream. Hence, the framed null hypothesis is rejected at (0.05%) level of significance. Significant difference was also noticed in two other factors of life skills, Problem solving, $F(2,97) = 2.956$, $p = 0.057$, $\eta^2 = .057$, which shows medium effect size and approx 6% variance was found in problem solving skills for academic stream and in Effective communication, $F(2,97) = 4.005$, $p = 0.021$, $\eta^2 = .076$, which also shows a medium effect size with approx 8% variance was noted in effective communication skills for academic stream.

The result also shows a no significant difference result for other three of the Life skills factors with regard to academic stream (science, commerce, arts) i.e., Empathy, $F(2,92) = 0.907$, $p = 0.407$, $\eta^2 = .018$, coping with stress, $F(2,92) = .409$, $p = .665$, $\eta^2 = .008$ and in critical thinking, $F(2,97) = 1.306$, $p = .276$, $\eta^2 = .026$. From the above analysis it can be concluded that there are significant different in overall life skill and two of its factors, i.e. problem solving and effective communication skill of the undergraduate students with respect to their academic stream.

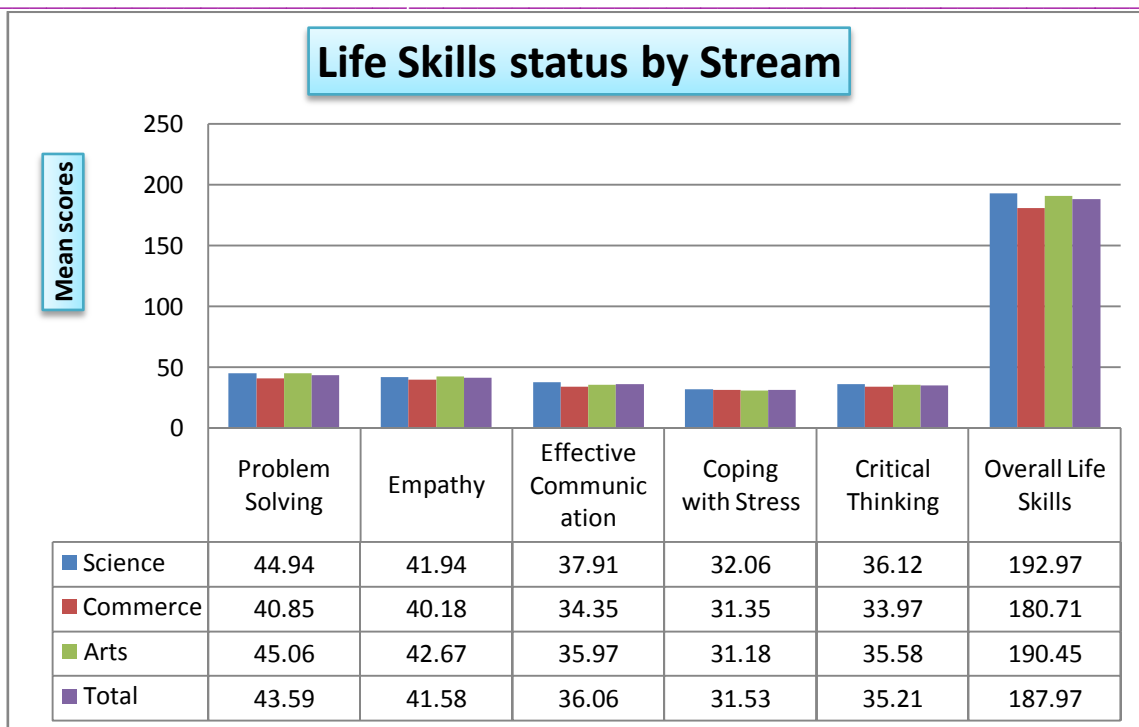


Figure 2. Graphical representation of Life skills scores with respect to the Academic stream

Fig 2, shows that the students who belong to science stream were scored higher mean scores in overall Life skills as compared to other two groups of streams i.e., Commerce and arts but it also depicts that the arts students got better scores than the commerce students. It can be clearly identified that among all the three academic streams students got higher mean scores in Problem solving and in Empathy skills.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this diversified and contemporary world subject based knowledge were given more importance than the knowledge required for living day to day life effectively. Every individual in this dynamic and competitive world encounter with various problems which can deteriorates their self-confidence and self-esteem. Life skills education is an integrated developmental programme which helps the individual to lead a healthy and prosperous social life. The major findings emerged through the statistical analysis of the present study shows that the male students hold far better position in terms of overall Life skills as compared to female students and the result was found statistically significant (p<0.01). And the result is very much obvious and predictable as in this male dominating society the actions of women are still controlled by the male members of the family and they are answerable for their actions. Significant result was also found with regards to student’s academic stream which indicated that science stream students were more equipped with all five factors of Life skills as compared to commerce and arts stream students. The result of the study indicates that life skills education is very much needed among the young adults of the society as it facilitates them to weigh the pros and cons creatively and rationally.

It can be concluded that imparting Life skills education provides students to gain knowledge of oneself, recognising ones strength and weakness and helps them to turn out to be a person with values, wroth and dignity. Life skills education must be incorporated in the regular curriculum framework and more enrichment programmes and active teaching learning methods like brainstorming, debates, buzz groups, role plays, simulation and class discussion should be employed by the teachers in the classroom. Special orientation programmes and campaign should be organised especially for females to enrich and gain more knowledge about the problems related to their health and global issues like HIV/AIDs, STD’s, teenage pregnancy, domestic violence and rights and policies present for them in the constitution as majority of

them are unaware of their own rights. Integration of more practical based knowledge is required as it will help the students to grow professionally and will be easier for them to achieve their future objectives.

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