



Life Skills and Well Beings of Adolescents

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Abstract- There are 1.3 billion adolescents in the world today, more than ever before, making up 16 per cent of the world's population. India has the largest adolescent population in the world, 253 million, and every fifth person is between 10 to 19 years. India stands to benefit socially, politically and economically if this large number of adolescents are safe, healthy, educated and equipped with information and life skills to support the country's continued development (UNICEF Website: <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/adolescent-development-participation>). As per UNICEF, both adolescent girls and boys lack access to information on issues affecting their lives and have limited spaces to develop competencies crucial for active participation (UNICEF Website: <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/adolescent-development-participation>). A review of earlier studies on life skills awareness in India highlighted about four out of every 10 youth having heard of the term 'life skills' or '21st century skills', Moreover low parental awareness; confusion in understanding "life skills" amongst young people and unclear understanding among school teachers about life skills even though may be familiar with the term highlights a gap that needs to be addressed. Life skills refer to the abilities that help promote mental wellbeing and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. Thus, the present paper focuses on awareness and relevancy of life skills for mental health and wellbeing among young people.

Keywords- Life skill, Adolescent, Awareness, Relevancy, Mental Health and Well-Being

I. Introduction

There are 1.3 billion adolescents in the world today, more than ever before, making up 16 per cent of the world's population. Defined by the United Nations as those between the ages of 10 and 19, adolescents experience a transition period between childhood and adulthood and with it, significant growth and development. As children up to the age of 18, most adolescents are protected under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet, their vulnerabilities and needs are distinctly different from those of children and therefore often remain unaddressed (UNICEF DATA- Adolescents Statistics Website).

The adolescents and total population in India, for each decadal census from 1961 to 2011 presented in Table 1, highlighted that during last four decades, the adolescent population has more than doubled from 116 millions in 1971 to 253 million in 2011 (United Nation Population Fund- India, 2011).



Table 1: Historical Trends in Growth of Adolescent Population in India, 1961-2011

Census Year	Population in 10-19 Years age group	Proportion of adolescent to total population (in %)
1961	8,51,88,721	19.4
1971	11,62,41,939	21.2
1981	15,00,50,174 1	22.6
1991	17,77,26,827 1	21.2
2001	22,50,62,748 1	21.9
2011	25,32,35,661	20.9

Source 1. United Nation Population Fund- India (2011) A Profile of Adolescents And Youth in India Website: https://india.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/AProfileofAdolescentsandYouthinIndia_0.pdf

India has the largest adolescent population in the world, 253 million, and every fifth person is between 10 to 19 years. India stands to benefit socially, politically and economically if this large number of adolescents are safe, healthy, educated and equipped with information and life skills to support the country's continued development. As per UNICEF, both adolescent girls and boys lack access to information on issues affecting their lives and have limited spaces to develop competencies crucial for active participation (UNICEF Website: <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/adolescent-development-participation>).

Adolescence is a dynamic period of growth and development. The term adolescents refer to individuals in the age group of 10 to 19 years and are understood in different ways in different cultural contexts (UNEP 1994; Awasthi and Chandra, 2012). Young mind is being considered, as the most productive members of the society, due to their physical and intellectual capability. But in real scenario, most of them are unable to utilize their potential in an appropriate way due to lack of guidance and motivation. Social problems like alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual abuse, smoking, juvenile delinquency, anti-social acts, etc. have an adverse effect on them and others too, to a large extent.

This new challenge requires immediate and an effective response from a socially responsible system of education. Education, now a days is hence, very important, but the kind of education, to support and live life better is more important. Thus, the cardinal focus of Education, therefore, needs an extraordinary emphasis on developing such skills in students, as they are the important building blocks for a dynamic citizen, who can cope up with future challenges, and survive (Prajapati et.al, 2017).

II. About 21st Century Skills

It is widely recognized that 21st-century skills consist of three main skill sets: Learning Skills; Literacy Skills and Life Skills.

First, Learning skills: The four C's such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication are by far the most popular 21st Century skills. These skills are



also called learning skills (Hummel, Website). Learning Skills are required for acquiring knowledge. Second, Literacy Skills aid in gaining knowledge through reading, media, and digital resources. Third, Life Skills are necessary for successfully navigating everyday life (<https://www.pragyanam.school/blog/the-role-of-life-skills-in-21st-century-education/> Website).

Among these three skills, Life skills are essential abilities that help individuals navigate everyday life, achieve their goals and maintain overall well-being. Life Skills are applicable for all ages of children and adolescents in school. However, the age group targeted is mainly 10-18 adolescent years, since young people of this age group seem to be most vulnerable to behaviour related health problems.

Life skills have been defined by World Health Organization (WHO) (1999) as “the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”. Life skill has been classified into three broad categories: Thinking Skills; Social Skills and Emotional Skills.

- Thinking skills are the skill that enhances the logical faculty of the brain using an analytical ability, thinking creatively and critically, and developing problem-solving skills and improving decision-making abilities.
- Social skills include interpersonal skills, communication skills, leadership skills, management skills, advocacy skills, co-operation and team building skills, etc.
- Emotional skills, involves, knowing and being comfortable with oneself. Thus, self-management, including managing/coping with feelings, emotions, stress and resisting peer and family pressure (Prajapati et.al 2017).

Life Skills are one of the components of 21st Century Skills. The need of Life Skills is also stated in the National Curriculum Framework (2005). The importance of the integration of Life Skills can be seen in the following excerpts from the National Curriculum Framework (2005): “Development of life skills such as critical thinking skills, interpersonal communication skills, negotiation/ refusal skills, decision making/ problem solving skills and coping and self- management skills is/are also very critical for dealing with the demands and challenges of everyday life.”

“The process of acquiring a sense of self is linked to physiological changes, and also learning to negotiate the social and psychological demands of being young adults. Responsible handling of issues like independence, intimacy, and peer group dependence are concerns that need to be recognized and appropriate support be given to cope with them.”

“It is important to recognize that adolescents need social and emotional support that may require reinforcement of norms of positive behaviour, development of life skills essential to cope with the risky situations that they encounter in their lives, manage peer pressure and deal with gender stereotypes.” Health & Physical Education has the potential to motivate learners to acquire generic skills like agility, balance coordination and life skills, especially critical and creative thinking, communication, problem solving, decision making, management of emotions and stress (Manodharan, Website).



III. Life Skill Education Approach

Life skills education approach is an interactive educational methodology that not only focus on transmitting knowledge but also aim at shaping attitudes and developing interpersonal skills. The important goals of the life skills approach are to enhance young people's abilities to take responsibility for making healthier choices, resisting negative pressures and avoiding risk behaviour. Teaching methods are youth centred gender sensitive, interactive and participatory.

The most common teaching methods include working in groups, brainstorming, role-playing-storytelling, debating, and participating in discussions and audio-visual activities. Therefore, Life-skills are the building blocks of one's behaviour and need to be learnt well/adequately to lead a healthy, meaningful and productive life (Awasthi and Kumari, 2012).

According to Errecart et al., (1991) and Caplan et al., (1992) life skills education proves to be an effective approach in primary prevention education, as its more interactive, uses problem solving approach and is activities based. Hence, teacher and the taught both involves in learn and fun too (Cited in Prajapati, et.al, 2017).

Life skills refer to the abilities that help promote mental well being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life (Sahu, 2023; Sahu and Gupta, 2013). Bhadra and Chakravarty (2024) study on 'role of mental health in life skills Education: its impact in present scenario' provided valuable insight into how life skills can significantly promote mental health as follows:

- Identification and Label-ling of Feelings: This is crucial because understanding and recognizing your emotions can be the first step in dealing with them effectively. By identifying feelings, you can take appropriate steps to manage them, especially in difficult or crisis situations. It empowers you to be more proactive in your mental health.
- Effective Communication: Self-talk plays a huge role in shaping one's mindset. Positive self-talk can boost confidence and mental resilience, while negative self-talk can worsen mental health. By becoming more aware of how we talk to ourselves, we can cultivate a more positive inner dialogue, which in turn supports better coping strategies.
- Preparation of Everyday "Me-time": Creating space for yourself—whether through self-care activities, hobbies, or simply unwinding—helps strengthen emotional well-being. Having a balance of work and personal time is essential for maintaining mental health. Working on your strengths and addressing areas of improvement in a non-pressuring way also helps in building a resilient mindset.
- Avoidance of Excessive Media Exposure: This is especially pertinent in today's digital age. Constant exposure to news, social media, and other digital platforms can have negative effects on mental health, such as anxiety and stress. By limiting screen time and verifying information, individuals can maintain a healthier mental state.
- Positive Strength Recognition: Reflecting on past successes and acknowledging the strengths that helped overcome challenges can serve as a powerful tool for



building self-esteem and resilience. This practice of self-reflection fosters a growth mindset and helps individuals handle future challenges more effectively. Bhadra and Chakravarty, (2024) also suggested that these strategies not only encourage good mental health but also nurture emotional intelligence and personal growth, which are essential for overall well-being.

The 10 to 19 years is a crucial period of learning Phase. Schools in India are running on a basic curriculum that has been there for years. We all have seen the traditional style of exhibiting education in our schools.

There are about five subjects in every class, students appear for exams twice a year and are promoted to the next class on basis of their performance and some are even given trophies and medals. Though these subjects cover almost all the information from the monarchy in the medieval period to trigonometry, they lack the basic life skills for which they seem to struggle even after getting into a job or marriage"-India Today (2018).

IV. Review methodology

This paper focuses on the awareness and relevance of life skills for the mental health and well-being of adolescents, based on a review of existing literature. Relevant articles were searched on Google Scholar and Google, using key terms such as "life skills AND 21st Century Skills," "life skills AND awareness AND adolescents," "life skills AND relevancy," and "life skills AND mental health in India AND adolescents" The information gathered from the related literature is reviewed and discussed below.

Literature Review on awareness and relevancy of life skills for well- being

Nasheeda, et. Al (2018) examined published literature on the effectiveness of life skills education programs for adolescents in developed and developing countries. Findings revealed differences in life skills education within developing countries and developed countries. In general, developed countries conduct more systematic life skills education programs promoting positive behaviour, with research articulating outcomes on individual youth.

In contrast, the majority of developing countries' life skills programs lack systematic implementation, evaluation and monitoring. Further highlighted that the programs are often conducted to yield short term results only. Qualitative studies on life skills education were limited. Minimal research attention has been directed towards adolescents' transfer of life skills knowledge into their daily lives.

Prajapati et al. (2017) highlighted the growing importance of life skills education, particularly its role in developing essential social, emotional, and cognitive abilities in young people. It acknowledges that while significant progress has been made in integrating life skills education, particularly for 21st-century students, there is still a need for further empirical research to strengthen the evidence base.

Smitha and Thomas (2018), study on awareness of life skills among Post Graduate Students, highlighted that as students play a crucial role in the preparation of communities or societies to explore innovative horizons and to gain higher progress level and development and this is possible to the fullest extent only if they are well



equipped with life skills. And to be well equipped with life skills first one needs to be aware of life skills and its significance in one's personal, social and professional life. Highlighting parents and teacher's role in awareness of life skills Smitha and Thomas (2018), suggested that right from the young age parents and teachers can work on promoting and developing awareness on life skills among children.

Parents can develop life skills among their children through daily life activities and prepare them to face the real world. Teaching kids with practical life skills will make them confident and happy while entering the nursery or pre-primary school and prepare them for their journey ahead. Planning life skills education programmes for youth that are relevant and meaningful by understanding their needs and demands will ensure sustainability of efforts.

To understand the level of awareness that young people, parents, and teachers about life skills and their perceptions, The Voices initiative (2023), conducted a survey on 15,856 rural youth, aged 14-22 in 11 districts spread across 6 states in India (Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Mizoram), 10 focus group discussions (FGDs) with 84 youth in 4 of these districts; 13,806 parents (of whom 47% were fathers and 53%); and teachers. A survey showed that about 4 in every 10 youth respondents had heard the term 'life skills' or '21st Century skills', with few differences visible by respondent gender. A higher proportion of older youth and those with more years of education had heard the term "life skills" than younger youth and those with fewer years of formal education. Youth with higher exposure to digital devices or to the news, and those with more educated parents were also more familiar with the term. However, familiarity with the term "life skills" does not imply youth respondents' understanding of the term.

When asked about life skills, a substantial proportion of youth in the focus group discussions gave examples of vocational skills. For example, in one of the FGDs with a girls' group in Hardwar District, where they confused it with Kaushal Kishor Yojna and referred to the centres where computer and tailoring courses are offered for young girls and boys. This confusion is visible in the survey data as well. For instance, intangible socioeconomic skills like relationship-management and coping with stress are considered life skills by around 90% of youth, while tangible skills like cooking and cycling are also considered life skills by 79.9% and 81.1% youth, respectively.

The voice survey findings revealed the enormous confusion, in understanding and awareness of "life skills" amongst young people in rural India. The majority of surveyed youth rely on schools/colleges to learn life skills (Voices, 2023). A parents and teachers survey revealed that while 34% of surveyed fathers had heard about life skills, only 21% of surveyed mothers had heard about them. Unlike either the youth or the parents surveyed, more than 90% of surveyed teachers had heard the term 'life skills' as well as the different specific life skill terms.

However, although a very high proportion of teachers had heard of life skills terms, these data suggest that school teachers are nonetheless unclear about what life skills consist of, and therefore, about how they can be taught. For example, most surveyed teachers believe that tangible skills (like cooking and cycling), intangible socio-



emotional skills (like relationship management and coping with stress), soft skills, and moral education; all come under life skills.

Rout et.al (2024) investigation, on awareness levels regarding life skill education among 60 pupil teachers of three Teacher Education Institutions in Odisha, revealed that both male & female pupil teachers have the same level of life skill awareness. However, Science stream pupil teachers have more awareness of Life skills than arts and suggested that it is necessary to make life skills a part of the teacher education curriculum to effectively implement in the classroom, as teachers can impart it to the student.

To sum up, Life skills are essential abilities that help individuals navigate everyday life, achieve their goals, maintain overall well-being. By understanding and developing these essential life skills, individuals can navigate everyday challenges, achieve their goals, and maintain overall well-being. As life Skills are one of the components of 21st Century Skills, there is a necessity of awareness of life skills to improve mental health and overall well-being.

The awareness of life skills will help prepare students responsible to make healthier choices and avoid risk behaviour such as bullying, violence, crime, antisocial behaviour, sexual abuse, alcoholic consumption, drug abuse, smoking, premarital pregnancy, peer conflicts, suicidal attempts, stress, trauma etc. and allow students to face the challenges and meet the demands in their life. A review of literature on life skills awareness in India highlighted about four out of every 10 youth having heard of the term 'life skills' or '21st century skills'

This low level of awareness among youth suggests a gap that needs to be addressed. Moreover, low parental awareness; confusion in understanding "life skills" amongst young people and unclear understanding among school teachers about life skills even though may be familiar with the term highlights a gap that needs to be addressed. To support this, programs focused on educating parents, teachers and pupil teachers about life skills could go a long way. Parents and teachers' roles are crucial in bridging this gap. They can play an active role in creating awareness and providing adolescents with the knowledge and tools they need. Also, the continuous monitoring and evaluation of these programs would be key to ensuring long-term success. As India has the largest adolescent (10 to 19 years) population, equipping them with life skills, not only for the young people will have substantial long-term benefits for themselves but for society as a whole.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, life skills play a vital role in enhancing the overall well-being of adolescents. During this critical stage of development, young people face numerous physical, emotional, and social changes that can impact their mental health and decision-making abilities. Equipping adolescents with essential life skills—such as communication, problem-solving, emotional regulation, critical thinking, and stress management—empowers them to navigate challenges effectively, build healthy relationships, and make informed choices.



Promoting these skills not only supports their immediate mental and emotional well-being but also lays the foundation for a healthier, more productive adult life. Families, schools, and communities must work together to create supportive environments where adolescents can learn, grow, and thrive. Ultimately, investing in the life skills and well-being of adolescents is an investment in the future of society.

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