



LIFE SKILLS AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS – A STUDY

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Abstract

The present study investigates the life skills of high school students in relation to selected demographic variables such as gender, social status, parental education, and parental occupation in the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. A sample of 200 9th class students were selected by using the simple random sampling technique from four schools, including two government and two private institutions. The Life Skills Scale (LSS), developed and standardized by Tripathi and Kumari (2019), was used to assess students' life skills across ten core dimensions—self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, interpersonal relationships, effective communication, coping with stress, and coping with emotions. The data collected was analyzed by using appropriate statistical techniques like Mean, Standard Deviation, Critical Ratio (CR), Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Tukey's HSD test.

The findings revealed that i) majority of high school students exhibit a moderate level of life skills. ii) Gender and parental occupation were found to have a significant influence on students' life skills. iii) social status and parental education did not show any significant impact. These results highlight the need for integrating structured life skills education into the school curriculum to enhance students' psychosocial competence and overall development.

Keywords: *Life Skills, Demographic Variables, High School Students, Gender, Parental Occupation*

1. Introduction:

The contemporary education system remains largely knowledge-orientated, emphasising conceptual understanding over the development of skills, values, and attitudes essential for real-life functioning. Modern society's complex challenges demand more than theoretical knowledge; they require the practical application of learning. Knowledge that remains unimplemented becomes ineffective in addressing the dynamic needs of life. Various educational commissions and committees have repeatedly highlighted this imbalance, stressing the insufficient focus on training and process-oriented learning within schools (NPE, 1986; NCERT, 2005). Consequently, there is an increasing need to integrate skill development into the teaching–learning process. These skills encompass a wide range—such as communication, soft, technological, research, and life skills—which collectively enable individuals to adapt and function effectively in diverse contexts (WHO, 1999; UNICEF, 2012).

Life skills, in particular, empower individuals to take constructive action, maintain positive relationships, and promote mental and social well-being. They help young people face everyday challenges with confidence and resilience (WHO, 1999). Recognising this need, schools have begun emphasising life-skills education as an integral part of the curriculum across all levels of schooling. Life skills education serves as an effective instrument for empowering youth to act responsibly, take initiative, and maintain self-control. It fosters emotional, cognitive, and social competence necessary for holistic development and well-being (UNICEF, 2012). Given the increasing mental health concerns among adolescents, integrating life skills education into school programme has become a crucial strategy for mental health promotion, with teachers serving as key facilitators in this process (WHO, 2001; Mangrulkar et al., 2001).

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005) emphasizes that the education system must focus on a child's present experiences rather than only preparing for the future. It advocates for an education that helps learners make sense of life, realize their potential, and pursue meaningful purposes while respecting other people's rights to do the same. Similarly, Dawes et al. (1997) assert that child and adolescent mental health encompass a sense of identity, self-worth, positive relationships, and the capacity to learn and adapt to developmental and cultural contexts. Sound mental health during childhood forms the foundation for psychological growth, social productivity, effective learning, and responsible adulthood. Therefore, integrating life skills education into school curricula is imperative to promote overall well-being, positive mental health, and lifelong adaptability among students.

2. Meaning of Life Skills:

Every individual aspires to lead a meaningful, civilised, and fulfilling life. To realise one's full potential and effectively navigate life's complexities, it is essential to develop and apply appropriate life skills. These skills enable individuals to function effectively in society, face challenges with confidence, and lead purposeful lives. Unlike academic or vocational skills, life skills are not confined to classroom instruction; rather, they are primarily acquired through real-life experiences, reflection, and social interaction.

Life skills are broadly defined as a combination of knowledge, attitudes, values, and behaviours that equip individuals to deal constructively with the demands and challenges of daily life (WHO, 1999). They encompass competencies such as self-directed learning, adaptability, emotional regulation, and effective communication. The acquisition of life skills cannot occur through abstract theoretical teaching alone; it requires active engagement with one's experiences, critical reflection, and interaction with real-world contexts (UNICEF, 2012).

Moreover, life skills evolve continuously in response to changing personal, social, economic, and cultural environments. Their development should be evaluated not merely through observable behavioural outcomes but through broader indicators such as cooperation, respect for diversity, tolerance, participation in community life, and the capacity to make informed and ethical decisions (UNESCO, 2017).

Life skills are not confined to a specific academic domain but represent an integrative application of knowledge, values, and competencies essential for personal growth and lifelong learning. They extend beyond survival, vocational, or livelihood skills, encompassing attributes that foster holistic personality development. Life skills also contribute to mental well-being, emotional stability, and social adaptability, preparing individuals to thrive in a dynamic and competitive world.

Essentially, life skills can be viewed as the "software" of human personality, complementing value education, which represents its "hardware". They involve cognitive, personal, and interpersonal capacities that enable individuals to make informed decisions, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build positive relationships, empathise with others, and cope with life's challenges in a healthy and productive manner (Mangrulkar et al., 2001). In short, life skills promote psychological competence and well-being, helping individuals – especially children and youth – to manage life's realities constructively and responsibly.

3. Definition of Life Skills:

The *International Bureau of Education (IBE)* derives its conceptualisation of life skills from Delors' four pillars of learning—*learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together*. It defines life skills as a combination of personal management and social abilities essential for independent and effective functioning in society (IBE, 2003). Similarly, *UNICEF (2012)* describes life skills as a *behavioural change or development approach* that addresses a balance among three key dimensions of human functioning: knowledge, attitude, and skills. Life skills, therefore, encompass the abilities that enhance mental well-being, emotional stability, and social competence, preparing individuals to face life's challenges effectively.

According to the *World Health Organisation (WHO, 1999)*, life skills education involves "the practice and reinforcement of psychological skills in a culturally and developmentally appropriate manner." It contributes to personal and social development, promotes health, prevents behavioural and social problems, and upholds human rights. Collectively, these definitions emphasise that life skills are foundational competencies that help individuals respond constructively to daily life situations, make informed decisions, and maintain positive relationships.

4. Teaching of Life Skills through Education

Life skills education has increasingly become a vital component of educational programs across both developed and developing nations over the past two decades. It serves as an effective means of promoting healthy lifestyles, fostering emotional intelligence, and nurturing social responsibility among learners of all age groups (UNESCO, 2017). The integration of life skills education within the school curriculum is regarded as a strategic investment in human capital, as it enhances productivity, strengthens employability, and contributes to the nation's socio-economic development (UNICEF, 2012).

Management skills for everyday life form a significant subset of life skills. These include communication, self-management, decision-making, and time management—abilities that enable individuals to handle personal responsibilities, family obligations, and social interactions efficiently. Such skills develop progressively as individuals mature, become self-aware, and learn to set and achieve goals (Mangrulkar et al., 2001).

Life skills also empower individuals to recognise their strengths and weaknesses, identify opportunities, and anticipate potential challenges. They facilitate critical thinking, problem-solving, and rational decision-making while fostering constructive interpersonal relationships. Thus, life skills education not only supports personal development but also enhances an individual's capacity to contribute meaningfully to society.

5. Review of the Related Literature

Das (2021) examined the attitudes of secondary school students toward life skills education using a sample of 100 students (50 boys and 50 girls) from Balasore district, selected through random sampling. The findings indicated a significant difference between boys and girls in their attitudes toward life skills education, with girls showing a more positive outlook. The study concluded that life skills education exerts a considerable influence on students' attitudes and behaviour. **Maqsood et al. (2022)** conducted an explanatory study on the role of life skills education in empowering secondary school students, drawing a sample of 220 students. The results revealed a significant gender-based difference in perceptions of life skills, with female students showing stronger awareness. Additionally, students from private schools demonstrated a higher perception of possessing essential life skills compared to their counterparts in public schools. **Neelam & Thakur (2023)** explored the life skills of adolescents concerning gender, type of school, and residential background. The sample consisted of 1,200 students from government and private schools located in rural and urban areas across four districts of Himachal Pradesh. The results showed no significant differences in life skills based on gender or residential background. However, significant variation was found between school types, with government school students exhibiting higher levels of life skills than those in private schools. **Kim et al. (2024)** in South Korea assessed the effectiveness of a blended life skills curriculum combining online and classroom learning in promoting adolescents' self-awareness and social connectedness. The study revealed that students who participated in the hybrid life skills program demonstrated greater adaptability, empathy, and conflict-resolution abilities, particularly in digitally mediated contexts.

6. Need and Importance of the Study

Adolescence is a transitional phase marked by significant physical, emotional, and social changes that influence an individual's overall development. High school students, being at the core of this stage, face numerous challenges such as academic pressure, peer influence, emotional instability, and career-related uncertainties. The ability to cope effectively with these challenges largely depends on possessing adequate life skills. Life skills empower students to think critically, make responsible decisions, communicate effectively, and manage stress constructively, thereby fostering personal well-being and social harmony.

In recent years, the education system in India has witnessed growing concern over students' declining emotional resilience, increasing behavioural problems, and a lack of coping mechanisms. Despite academic achievements, many students struggle to apply their knowledge to real-life situations. Therefore, the need for life skills education has become more pronounced to equip students with the competencies required for managing daily life

challenges effectively (WHO, 1999; UNICEF, 2012). Integrating life skills development into the school system not only enhances learners' academic and social adjustment but also promotes mental health, positive self-concept, and interpersonal relationships.

The study of life skills among high school students is particularly important because this stage lays the foundation for adulthood. Understanding students' life skills in relation to their demographic variables – such as gender, parental education, parental occupation and socio-economic status – helps identify differences in skill acquisition and application. These variables often influence students' exposure, learning environment, and access to life skill-enhancing opportunities. Examining these relationships provides valuable insights for teachers, parents, and policymakers to design targeted interventions for diverse groups of learners.

Furthermore, the findings of this study can contribute to improving the curricular and co-curricular strategies in schools by integrating life skill-based activities that promote holistic development. It also supports educational administrators in planning training programmes for teachers to act as facilitators of life skills education. The study thus gains importance in the current educational scenario, where academic achievement alone cannot ensure personal success and social adaptability.

In essence, this research is significant, as it aims to assess the existing level of life skills among high school students and explore how demographic factors influence these skills. The outcomes are expected to guide curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers in strengthening life skills education to nurture emotionally balanced, socially responsible, and self-reliant citizens capable of contributing positively to society.

7. Statement of the Problem:

The title of the present investigation is “*Life Skills among High School Students-A Study*” in Srikakulam District of AP.

8. Limitations of the Present Study:

The present study was confined to a limited geographical area, focusing exclusively on the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. The investigation covered only four secondary schools, comprising two government and two private institutions. The sample size was restricted to 200 high school students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Furthermore, the level of significance adopted for statistical analysis was set at 0.05 and 0.01 levels, which may influence the interpretation of the results within these defined confidence limits.

9. Objectives of the Study:

The following objectives were formulated for the present investigation.

1. To know the level of life skills among high school students.

2. To find out the significant differences in in the life skills of high school students with respect to gender, social status, parental education, & parental occupation.

10. Hypotheses of the Study:

The following hypotheses were formulated to test the stated objectives.

1. High school students do not differ in their levels of life skills.
2. There will be no significant difference in the life skills among high school students with respect gender, social status, parental education, and parental occupation.

11. Methodology:

For the purpose of the study the investigator used survey method. To study the present problem the investigator selected students studying 9th class in high schools in Srikakulam district of AP. Srikakulam district is considered as one of the back ward districts of Andhra Pradesh in terms of education and overall development. For the purpose of the study the investigator identified 4 high schools and 200 students were chosen as sample by using simple random sampling technique from selected four secondary schools (2 Govt. & 2 Private)

Tool used: The researcher used Life Skills Scale (LSS), developed and standardized by Tripathi and Kumari (2019), the scale consists of 52 items, out of 52 items, 26 positively worded and 26 negatively worded measuring ten core dimensions of life skills: i) self-awareness, ii) empathy, iii) critical thinking, iv) creative thinking, v) decision-making, vi) problem-solving, vii) interpersonal relationships, viii) effective communication, ix) coping with stress, and x) coping with emotions. These dimensions collectively assess essential psychosocial competencies that enable individuals to think constructively, interact effectively, and adapt confidently to life's challenges.

Scoring procedure: The LSS employs a five-point Likert scale with response options ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Positively worded statements are scored from 5 to 1, while negatively worded items are reverse-scored to minimise response bias. The total score, obtained by summing responses to all 52 items, ranges from 52 to 260. Higher scores indicate a greater level of life skills competence, whereas lower scores reflect limited proficiency.

The collected data was analysed by using Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation, Critical Ratio (CR), Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Tukey's Honest Significant Difference (HSD) test.

12. Analysis of Data and Interpretation of Results:

H₀ 1: High school students do not differ in their levels of life skills.

To test this hypothesis, the mean and standard deviation of the students' Life Skills Scale scores were computed, yielding values of 180 and 17, respectively. Based on these statistics, the sample was categorised into three levels of life skills performance: high (scores above $M + 1SD$), moderate (scores between $M - 1SD$ & $M + 1SD$), and low (scores below $M - 1SD$). The details and descriptions of these categories are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Classification of The Total Sample on Life Skills

Scores	Classification	N	%
163 & below	Low	041	20
B/w 164 & 196	Moderate	125	63
197 & above	High	034	17
Total		200	100

As shown in Table 1, 20% of the students exhibit low levels of life skills, 63% demonstrate a moderate level, and 17% display a high level of life skills. This distribution indicates that the majority of students possess a moderate degree of life skills, while comparatively fewer students fall into the high and low categories. Overall, the findings suggest noticeable variability in life skills development among high school students.

H₀ 2: Gender of high school students doesn't make a significant difference in their life skills.

Table 2: Life Skills – Gender - Mean - SD - C.R.

Gender	N	M	SD	D	$\frac{\sigma}{D}$	CR	Remarks
Boy	101	175.57	15.87			4.85****	S @
Girl	099	184.94	11.09	9.37	1.93		0.01 level

From Table 2, the obtained C.R. value of 4.85 exceeds the table value of 2.58, indicating significance at the 0.01 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It can be concluded that the gender of high school students makes a significant difference in their life skills. The mean score of girls is higher than that of boys, suggesting that female students exhibit a higher level of life skills compared to their male counterparts.

H₀ 3: Social status of high school students doesn't make a significant difference in their life skills.

Table 3: *Life Skills - Social Status -Means - SDs – ANOVA - F-value*

Social status	N	M	SD	F-value	Remarks
BC	089	177.85	17.79	1.66*	NS @ 0.05 level
OC	045	181.87	16.25		
SC	046	184.20	17.21		
ST	020	177.80	16.22		
ANOVA Summary					
Source of variation	SS	df	MS		
Between groups	1468.183	003	489.394		
Within groups	57796.315	196	294.879		
Total	59264.498	199			

From Table 3, the obtained F-value of 1.66 with $df = 3$ and 196 is less than the critical value of 2.65, indicating that the result is not significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained. This suggests that the social status of high school students does not make a significant difference in their life skills.

H₀ 4: Parental education of high school students doesn't make a significant difference in their life skills.

Table 4: *Life Skills - Parental Education - Means - SDs - ANOVA - F-value*

Parental Education	N	M	SD	F-value	Remarks
Illiterate	064	177.44	17.65	1.78*	NS @ 0.05 level
Upto 10 th class	096	179.91	16.73		
Intermediate	022	185.09	16.01		
Graduate & above	018	185.72	18.94		
ANOVA Summary					
Source of variation	SS	df	MS		
Between groups	1570.103	003	523.368		
Within groups	57696.766	196	294.371		
Total	59266.869	199			

From Table 4, the obtained F-value of 1.78 with $df = 3$ and 196 is less than the critical value of 2.65, indicating that the result is not significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained. This suggests that the parental education of high school students doesn't make a significant difference in their life skills. Since the F-value is not significant, no further post-hoc analysis is required to examine subgroup differences among the various social status categories.

H₀: Parental occupation of high school students doesn't make a significant difference in their life skills.

Table 5: *Life Skills - Parental Occupation - Means - SDs - ANOVA - F-value*

Parental Occupation	N	Mean	SD	F-value	Remarks
Agriculture	053	177.02	16.43		
Business	039	174.33	18.47		
Daily wage	074	186.01	15.37		
Employee	034	179.29	17.95		S
ANOVA Summary				5.24***	@ 0.01
Source of variation	SS	df	MS		level
Between groups	4405.871	003	1468.624		
Within groups	54878.465	196	279.992		
Total	59284.336	199			

From Table 5, the obtained F-value of 5.24 with df = 3 and 196 exceeds the critical value of 3.88, indicating that the result is significant at the 0.01 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that the parental occupation of high school students makes a significant difference in their life skills. As the F-value is significant, post-hoc analysis (Tukey's HSD test) is necessary to identify the specific subgroup differences among the various parental occupation categories.

Table 6: *Life Skills – Parental Occupation - Tukey's HSD Test for Pairwise Comparisons*

Parental Occupation	Parental Occupation			D	HSD	Remarks
	Agriculture	Business	Daily wage			
177.02	174.33	---	---	2.69	10.26	NS
177.02	---	186.01	---	8.99	8.42	S
177.02	---	---	179.29	2.77	10.67	NS
---	174.33	186.01	---	11.68	9.61	S
---	174.33	---	179.29	4.96	11.40	NS
---	---	186.01	179.29	6.92	1006	NS

From Table 6, the results of Tukey's HSD test indicate that there are significant differences in life skills among certain groups based on parental occupation. Specifically, significant differences were found between students whose parents are engaged in business and those from agricultural backgrounds, as well as between students from business and daily wage worker families, since the obtained mean differences (8.99 & 11.68) exceed the respective HSD critical values (8.42 & 9.61). However, no significant differences were observed among other groups, such as agriculture and employee, agriculture and daily wage,

business and employee, or daily wage and employee categories, as their mean differences were below the HSD critical values. These findings suggest that students whose parents are involved in business tend to exhibit higher levels of life skills compared to those from agricultural and daily wage backgrounds.

13. Major Findings of the Study:

1. Majority of high school students 63% demonstrate a moderate level. 20% of the students exhibit low levels of life skills, and 17% display a high level of life skills. The findings suggest noticeable variability in life skills development among high school students.
2. Gender and parental occupation of high school students make a significant difference in their life skills.
3. Social status and parental education of high school students don't make a significant difference in their life skills.

14. Educational Implications:

- As a considerable proportion of students display moderate or low levels of life skills, it is essential to integrate structured life skills education within the school curriculum. This should focus on experiential learning, problem-solving, and decision-making to help students apply knowledge effectively in real-life situations.
- Since gender significantly influences life skills, schools must implement gender-responsive programs that promote emotional expression, empathy, and communication, particularly among boys, to minimize gender disparities in life skills development.
- The absence of significant differences based on social status suggests that schools can act as equalizing platforms, providing equitable learning opportunities to all students through inclusive practices and collaborative learning strategies.
- Although parental education does not significantly impact students' life skills, parental involvement remains crucial. Schools should conduct parental awareness and orientation programs to highlight their role in fostering life skills and positive behaviours at home.
- As parental occupation influences students' life skills, schools need to identify those with limited exposure to diverse social and occupational environments and offer counselling, mentoring, and vocational guidance to enhance their adaptability and confidence.
- Teachers should be trained as facilitators of life skills education. Professional development programs should equip teachers with strategies to foster students' self-awareness, critical thinking, interpersonal relationships, and coping abilities through participatory and activity-based methods.

15. Conclusion:

A significant difference was observed with respect to gender and parental occupation, suggesting that these factors play an influential role in shaping students' life skills. Female students exhibited higher levels of life skills than their male counterparts, while students whose parents were engaged in business or salaried employment demonstrated stronger life skills compared to those from agricultural or daily-wage backgrounds. Conversely, social status and parental education did not show a significant impact, implying that life skills development may depend more on environmental exposure and experiential learning than on socio-educational background alone.

The results emphasize the importance of integrating structured and experiential life skills programmes within the school curriculum to promote students' emotional intelligence, interpersonal competence, and problem-solving abilities. Teachers should be adequately trained to act as facilitators in nurturing these essential skills through activity-based and participatory approaches. Moreover, collaboration among teachers, parents, and school administrators is vital to creating an environment conducive to the holistic development of students.

The present study explored the life skills of high school students in relation to selected demographic variables—gender, social status, parental education, and parental occupation—in the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. The findings revealed that a majority of students possess a moderate level of life skills, indicating a need for systematic efforts to strengthen life skills education at the secondary level.

In conclusion, the study reaffirms that life skills education is not merely supplementary but a crucial component of quality education. Strengthening these competencies among adolescents will help them become emotionally balanced, socially responsible, and self-reliant individuals capable of meeting the challenges of modern life with confidence and resilience.

16. Recommendations:

1. *Strengthening Life Skills Education in Schools:* As a considerable proportion of students exhibit moderate or low levels of life skills, schools should systematically integrate life skills education into the formal curriculum. Emphasis should be placed on experiential and participatory learning strategies such as role play, group discussions, problem-solving exercises, and community-based projects to promote holistic development.

2. *Implementing Gender-Sensitive Educational Strategies:* Since gender differences were found to significantly influence life skills, gender-responsive programs should be designed and implemented. These initiatives should particularly encourage boys to develop empathy, emotional regulation, and interpersonal communication, while continuing to strengthen self-confidence and leadership qualities among girls.
3. *Promoting Inclusivity Across Social Groups:* As social status does not significantly affect life skills, schools should continue to serve as inclusive environments that promote equity and social cohesion. Activities that encourage collaboration among students from diverse backgrounds should be enhanced to sustain social harmony and equal learning opportunities.
4. *Enhancing Parental Involvement and Awareness:* Although parental education did not significantly influence students' life skills, parents play a vital role in shaping children's attitudes and behaviours. Schools should organize parental awareness programs, workshops, and counselling sessions to guide parents on how to nurture essential life skills at home.
5. *Fostering Career and Occupational Awareness:* Since parental occupation was found to influence students' life skills, schools should provide career guidance, vocational education, and mentorship opportunities to expose students to various professions. Such exposure can help students broaden their perspectives, develop adaptability, and acquire practical life skills needed for future success.

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