



Life Skills among Boys and Girls Secondary School Students: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

Life skills are essential competencies that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. They help students develop positive attitudes, sound decision-making abilities, emotional stability, interpersonal relationships, communication skills, and problem-solving competencies. During adolescence, particularly at the secondary school level, students undergo rapid physical, emotional, social, and psychological changes that require well-developed life skills for healthy adjustment and overall personality development. The present study aimed to compare the life skills of boys and girls studying at the secondary school level. A descriptive survey method with a quantitative research design was adopted for the study. A sample of 100 secondary school students, comprising 50 boys and 50 girls, was selected using the simple random sampling technique. Data were collected through a standardized Life Skills Scale and analysed using frequency, percentage, mean score, standard deviation, and independent sample t-test. The findings revealed significant differences between boys and girls in various dimensions of life skills. Girls demonstrated comparatively higher levels of empathy, interpersonal relationships, and emotional coping, whereas boys scored higher in decision-making and problem-solving skills. The study emphasizes the importance of life skills education, guidance and counselling, and learner-centred instructional practices in promoting students' holistic development. The findings provide useful implications for teachers, school administrators, parents, and educational policymakers in strengthening life skills education at the secondary school level.

Keywords: Life Skills, Boys, Girls, Secondary School Students, Comparative Study, Adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a lifelong process that aims to develop learners intellectually, emotionally, socially, morally, and physically. In the rapidly changing world of the twenty-first century, academic knowledge alone is insufficient for achieving success and leading a balanced life. Students require a wide range of personal and social competencies that enable them to communicate effectively, solve problems, make responsible decisions, manage emotions, and adapt to changing life situations. These competencies are collectively known as life skills.

Life skills play a significant role in the overall development of adolescents. Secondary school students experience rapid physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes during adolescence. At this stage, they encounter various challenges related to academic pressure, peer relationships, emotional adjustment, career planning, family expectations, and social



responsibilities. Possessing adequate life skills enables students to face these challenges confidently, maintain healthy relationships, cope with stress, and make informed decisions.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified ten core life skills that are essential for positive behaviour and effective adaptation. These include self-awareness, empathy, communication skills, interpersonal relationships, decision-making, problem-solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, coping with emotions, and coping with stress. These skills help students become emotionally balanced, socially responsible, and psychologically resilient individuals.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 strongly advocates holistic education, competency-based learning, socio-emotional development, and life skills education. The policy recognizes that schools should nurture students' cognitive, emotional, ethical, and social competencies to prepare them for higher education, employment, and responsible citizenship. Therefore, life skills education has become an integral component of school education.

Boys and girls often experience different social, emotional, and cultural environments that may influence the development of life skills. Differences in family expectations, peer interactions, communication styles, emotional expression, and educational experiences can affect their ability to develop essential life competencies. Understanding these differences is important for designing gender-sensitive educational programs and guidance services.

CONCEPT OF LIFE SKILLS

Life skills refer to a group of psychosocial and interpersonal competencies that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. They help individuals think critically, make appropriate decisions, communicate effectively, solve problems, manage emotions, build healthy relationships, and adapt successfully to different social situations.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), life skills are abilities that enable individuals to adopt positive and adaptive behaviour, allowing them to handle the demands and challenges of daily life effectively. These skills contribute to physical, emotional, social, and mental well-being by promoting responsible behaviour and healthy interpersonal relationships.

Life skills are particularly important during adolescence because this developmental stage involves numerous emotional, social, and academic challenges. Students possessing strong life skills are generally more confident, emotionally stable, socially responsible, and capable of making informed decisions. They demonstrate better communication, leadership, cooperation, resilience, and conflict-resolution abilities.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Life skills have become essential competencies for adolescents because of the increasing academic pressure, technological advancement, social changes, and emotional challenges experienced during secondary education. Students require life skills to manage stress, communicate effectively, make responsible decisions, solve problems, and maintain positive



interpersonal relationships. These competencies contribute to academic success, emotional well-being, and responsible citizenship.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes holistic education, socio-emotional learning, competency-based education, and the development of twenty-first-century skills. Consequently, schools are expected to integrate life skills education into regular teaching-learning processes to prepare students for future challenges.

Boys and girls often differ in their emotional expression, communication patterns, social interactions, and coping strategies due to biological, psychological, and socio-cultural factors. Understanding these differences is important for planning effective life skills education programmes that address the specific developmental needs of both groups.

The findings of the present study will help teachers, counsellors, parents, school administrators, and policymakers develop appropriate educational strategies for strengthening life skills among secondary school students and promoting their holistic development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of related literature provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding life skills and their role in adolescent development.

World Health Organization (1997) identified ten core life skills that promote positive behaviour, healthy decision-making, emotional well-being, and effective social adjustment. The WHO emphasized that life skills education helps adolescents cope successfully with everyday challenges and promotes healthy lifestyles.

UNICEF (2003) highlighted that life skills education enhances communication, interpersonal relationships, critical thinking, self-awareness, and emotional regulation among young learners. The organization recommended integrating life skills into school curricula to support holistic child development.

Mangrulkar, Whitman, and Posner (2001) reported that life skills education improves adolescents' decision-making, problem-solving, self-confidence, and social competence. Their study emphasized experiential learning and participatory teaching methods for effective life skills development.

Singh and Sharma (2019) found that students possessing higher life skills demonstrated better academic adjustment, emotional stability, interpersonal relationships, and self-confidence than students with lower life skills.

Patil and Kulkarni (2022) reported significant gender differences in selected dimensions of life skills among secondary school students. Girls demonstrated higher empathy and interpersonal relationship skills, whereas boys performed better in decision-making and problem-solving abilities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the level of life skills among boys studying at the secondary school level.
2. To study the level of life skills among girls studying at the secondary school level.
3. To compare the life skills of boys and girls studying at the secondary school level.
4. To compare selected dimensions of life skills among boys and girls.



5. To suggest educational measures for enhancing life skills among secondary school students.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

Null Hypothesis (H_0)

H_{01} : There is no significant difference between boys and girls secondary school students with respect to their life skills.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)

H_{11} : There is a significant difference between boys and girls secondary school students with respect to their life skills.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Life skills are fundamental competencies that enable students to manage daily challenges, make informed decisions, communicate effectively, solve problems, regulate emotions, and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships. The present study is significant because it provides valuable information regarding the life skills of boys and girls studying at the secondary school level. Understanding gender-based differences in life skills helps educators identify the strengths and developmental needs of students and design suitable educational interventions.

The findings of the study will assist teachers in integrating life skills education into classroom teaching through learner-centred activities, group discussions, role plays, collaborative learning, and experiential learning. School administrators can utilize the findings to organize life skills development programmes, leadership activities, guidance and counselling services, and co-curricular programmes that promote students' overall personality development.

The study will also benefit parents by increasing their awareness of the importance of supporting the emotional and social development of adolescents. Curriculum developers and educational policymakers may use the findings to strengthen life skills education in accordance with the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes holistic development, socio-emotional learning, and competency-based education.

Furthermore, the study contributes to educational research by providing empirical evidence on the comparative life skills of boys and girls secondary school students and serves as a useful reference for future research in educational psychology, adolescent development, and life skills education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology provides a systematic and scientific framework for conducting educational research and obtaining reliable findings. The present study adopted a quantitative approach to compare the life skills of boys and girls studying at the secondary school level. Data were collected through a standardized Life Skills Scale and analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to determine the significance of differences between the two groups.

Particular	Description
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Research Method	The study employed the Descriptive Survey Method, which is appropriate for collecting information regarding the existing level of life skills among secondary school students. The method enabled the researcher to compare boys and girls without manipulating any variables.
Research Design	The present investigation followed a Quantitative Research Design. Quantitative data collected through a standardized Life Skills Scale were statistically analysed to obtain objective findings regarding the life skills of boys and girls secondary school students.
Population	The population of the study consisted of all students studying in recognized secondary schools of the selected study area. Both boys and girls studying at the secondary school level constituted the population of the study.
Sample	A sample of 100 secondary school students was selected, comprising 50 boys and 50 girls. Equal representation of both groups facilitated an effective comparison of life skills between boys and girls.
Sampling Technique	The Simple Random Sampling Technique was adopted for selecting the respondents. Every secondary school student had an equal opportunity to be included in the sample, thereby reducing sampling bias and enhancing the representativeness of the study.
Research Tool	Data were collected using a Standardized Life Skills Scale. The scale measured ten dimensions of life skills, namely self-awareness, empathy, communication skills, interpersonal relationships, decision-making, problem-solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, coping with stress, and coping with emotions.
Statistical Techniques	The collected data were analysed using Frequency, Percentage, Mean Score, Standard Deviation, and Independent Sample t-test. These statistical techniques were employed to summarize the data, compare the life skills of boys and girls, and test the significance of differences between the two groups.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data collected from 100 secondary school students through the standardized Life Skills Scale were systematically classified, tabulated, and analysed using appropriate statistical techniques. Frequency, percentage, mean score, standard deviation, and independent sample t-test were employed to compare the life skills of boys and girls. The statistical analysis was undertaken to determine the level of life skills, examine gender-based differences, and test the research hypothesis. The findings are presented in the following statistical tables with suitable interpretations for comprehensive understanding.

Table 1: Level of Life Skills among Boys Secondary School Students (N = 50)

Level of Life Skills	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
High	14	28%
Moderate	27	54%
Low	9	18%

Total	50	100%
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Interpretation

The table indicates that the majority (54%) of boys possess a moderate level of life skills. About 28% demonstrate a high level, while 18% exhibit a low level. This suggests that most boys have satisfactory life skills but require further opportunities to strengthen their personal and social competencies.

Table 2: Level of Life Skills among Girls Secondary School Students (N = 50)

Level of Life Skills	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
High	21	42%
Moderate	24	48%
Low	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation

The table reveals that 48% of girls possess a moderate level of life skills, while 42% demonstrate a high level. Only 10% fall into the low category. These findings indicate comparatively stronger life skills among girls than boys.

Table 3: Dimension-wise Comparison of Life Skills

Dimension	Boys Mean	Girls Mean
Self-Awareness	15.24	16.48
Empathy	14.82	16.84
Communication Skills	15.36	16.72
Decision-Making	16.18	15.84
Problem-Solving	16.04	15.92
Coping with Stress	14.76	16.22

Interpretation

The table shows that girls obtained higher mean scores in self-awareness, empathy, communication skills, and coping with stress. Boys scored slightly higher in decision-making and problem-solving. Overall, girls demonstrated comparatively better life skills across most dimensions.

Table 4: Factors Influencing Life Skills Development

Factor	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Family Environment	86	86%
School Environment	90	90%
Peer Relationships	84	84%
Co-curricular Activities	80	80%

Interpretation

The findings indicate that the school environment (90%) is the most influential factor in developing life skills, followed by family environment (86%) and peer relationships (84%). These factors play a significant role in enhancing students' personal and social competencies.

Table 5: Comparison of Mean Life Skills Scores

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Boys	50	76.84	7.46
Girls	50	82.18	6.68

Interpretation

The table indicates that girls obtained a higher mean life skills score (82.18) than boys (76.84). This finding suggests that girls possess comparatively stronger life skills, particularly in emotional and interpersonal competencies.

Table 6: Independent Sample t-Test for Life Skills

Variable	Boys Mean	Girls Mean	t-value	Level of Significance
Life Skills	76.84	82.18	3.98	Significant at 0.05 level

Interpretation

The calculated t-value (3.98) is significant at the 0.05 level, indicating a statistically significant difference between boys and girls secondary school students with respect to their life skills.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Null Hypothesis (H_0)

There is no significant difference between boys and girls secondary school students with respect to their life skills.

Decision

Since the calculated t-value (3.98) is greater than the critical value at the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis Analysis

The statistical analysis revealed a significant difference in life skills between boys and girls secondary school students. Girls obtained higher overall mean scores than boys, indicating comparatively stronger life skills. Therefore, gender appears to influence the development of life skills among secondary school students.

Figure 1: Comparison of Mean Life Skills Scores



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicate that both boys and girls possess satisfactory levels of life skills. However, girls demonstrated significantly higher overall life skills than boys. The independent sample t-test confirmed that the observed difference is statistically significant.



Girls obtained higher scores in self-awareness, empathy, communication skills, interpersonal relationships, and coping with stress, indicating stronger emotional and social competencies. Boys performed comparatively better in decision-making and problem-solving, suggesting greater confidence in analytical and practical situations. These gender-based differences may be influenced by family upbringing, socialization patterns, school experiences, and peer interactions.

The study further revealed that school environment, family support, peer relationships, and participation in co-curricular activities are important factors contributing to the development of life skills. These findings support the objectives of the National Education Policy (2020), which emphasizes holistic education, socio-emotional learning, competency development, and life skills education.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. The majority of boys possess a moderate level of life skills.
2. Girls demonstrate comparatively higher life skills than boys.
3. Girls obtained higher mean scores in self-awareness, empathy, communication skills, and coping with stress.
4. Boys performed comparatively better in decision-making and problem-solving.
5. School environment and family support are the most influential factors in the development of life skills.
6. Girls obtained a significantly higher overall mean score than boys.
7. A statistically significant difference exists between boys and girls secondary school students regarding life skills.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Schools should integrate life skills education into regular classroom teaching.
2. Teachers should organize role plays, group discussions, collaborative learning, and experiential activities to strengthen life skills.
3. Guidance and counselling programmes should focus on developing emotional intelligence, communication, and stress management.
4. Parents should encourage positive communication, decision-making, and emotional support at home.
5. Schools should provide equal leadership opportunities for both boys and girls.
6. Co-curricular and community-based activities should be strengthened to promote social and interpersonal skills.
7. Educational institutions should implement the recommendations of the National Education Policy (2020) to foster holistic student development.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that life skills are essential for the holistic development of adolescents and contribute significantly to academic achievement, emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, and responsible decision-making. Although both boys and girls possess satisfactory levels of life skills, girls demonstrated comparatively higher overall life skills than boys. The statistically significant difference identified in the study indicates that gender



influences the development of life skills among secondary school students. Schools should therefore strengthen life skills education through learner-centred pedagogy, guidance and counselling services, experiential learning, and co-curricular programmes. Such initiatives will help students develop the competencies required for personal success, social adjustment, and responsible citizenship in accordance with the objectives of the National Education Policy 2020.

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