



LIFE SKILL BASED EDUCATION: A SYSTEMATIC NARRATIVE REVIEW

Deepa Sikand Kauts  and Jaspreet Saini 

Life skills-based education is required because adolescents today are exposed to different lifestyles, media, and rising expectations. The present scenario is full of violence, threat, crime, and drug abuse among the young generation. The immediate solution visible to the world is to enhance life skills among the future generation. Generally, adolescents look forward to peers/ teachers/parents and guardians for several daily issues. This review aims to trace a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of life skills education. It also aims to identify research gaps and priorities. This paper reviews 15 research articles and five official documents to draw a pen sketch of life skill-based education. This review is helpful to administrators, policymakers, researchers, and teachers for implementing an effective life skills program. The findings can act as inputs for developing sustainable life skills programs to ensure the transfer of knowledge and skills. The review of the literature suggests that a proper and relevant intervention in life skills can help school children develop their cognitive and social skills to lead healthy life. It can uplift the self-concept of adolescents.

KEYWORDS: Life Skills Based Education, Adolescents, Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

For creating an equitable and just society, education is the only tool. Life skills-based education is the building block of lifelong attitudes and the holistic development of human beings. Adolescents need guidance to handle troubles. Life skills are helpful in social adaptation in adolescents and help infuse positive ideas in the minds of adolescents during stressful situations life skills provide a strong foundation for mental well-being, healthy interaction, and

Deepa Sikand Kauts

Professor, Faculty of Education, GNDU, Amritsar, India.

Email: kdeepasikand@gmail.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8661-465X>

Jaspreet Saini 

Research Scholar, Department of Education, GNDU, Amritsar, India.

Email: jassamrit11@gmail.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0902-4653>



This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

behaviour. The National Education Policy 2020 considers life skills important in the development of children because it leads to good communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience. Critical life skills (including financial literacy, digital literacy, commercial skills, health care and awareness, child care and education, and family welfare) are also prominent areas discussed in NEP 2020.

The life of adolescents is involved in a digital world. The new generation is digitally innate, and this digital world is transparent. From theory to the practice of the educative process the focus is to train adolescents to keep them on the desirable lines of development. Education is the backbone for the development of the youth of every nation. Presently, the scenario of education is different from the routine or traditional pathways. Nowadays, new crossroads of education are there. Present times are characterized by threats to peace and justice in human life. In such situations, education systems need to be proactive in policy-making and practices to keep the process of developing adolescents under changing conditions where attention is equally divided into academic outcomes as well as life skills. [Vicary et al. \(2004\)](#) found that life skill training in adolescent girls showed improvement in assertiveness, refusal skills and attributes towards drugs. [Goudas et al. \(2006\)](#) found that students with enhanced knowledge about life skills have higher self-belief for personal goal setting. [Yadav and Iqbal \(2009\)](#) found a significant difference in self-esteem, emotional, educational, total adjustment, and empathy. [Vranda and Rao \(2011\)](#) studied that life skills training enhanced the psychosocial competencies of adolescents. [Menrath \(2012\)](#) found that school-based life skill programmes have a positive effect on smoking prevention regardless of socio-economic status. [Roodbari et al. \(2013\)](#) in their research showed that life skills training has a positive effect and improves social development, and emotional and social adjustment, suggesting an increase in the compatibility of children and public health. [Naseri and Babakhani \(2014\)](#) found that the physical and verbal aggression of adolescent boys significantly reduced because of life skills training including anger control, problem-solving and decision-making, self-cognition, confronting stress and communication skills. [Kazemi et al. \(2014\)](#) indicated a significant increase in self-esteem and communication skills after the life skills training programme. In today's world in any sector of a job, the major demand is for persons equipped with life skills especially leadership, interpersonal relationships, and communication skills. Life skills-based education leads to the self-management of the individual. Life Skill Based Education focuses on the development of critical thinking, analytical thinking, and negotiation skills in managing information, knowledge and experiences in various areas of life. Life skills-based education can help an individual especially adolescent learners to decrease their behavioural and social problems. Not only this, but the present world also demanded skills which can support

adolescents to meet the demand for judging people and resolving disagreements. For this Life skills are the best media to develop all the competencies. "Life skills education is designed to facilitate the practice and reinforcement of psychosocial skills in a culturally and developmentally appropriate way; it contributes to the promotion of personal and social development, the prevention of health and social problems, and the protection of human rights" [World Health Organisation \(1993\)](#).

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

[UNICEF \(2002\)](#) in its annual report, refers to life skills as a large group of psychosocial and interpersonal skills which can help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop coping and self-management skills that may help them lead a healthy and productive life. Life skills are directed towards personal actions and actions towards others, as well as actions to change the surrounding environment to make it conducive to health [UNICEF \(2006\)](#). Life skills help the individual to understand the way of communicating with himself and others. Life skills lead human life and it gives us the enlightening path on which an individual must live his life. According to Nair (2005), life skills are nothing but personal skills. UNICEF says Life Skills empower positive relationships. The demand for implementing and executing Life Skills in school Curricula is at a high peak because life skills reinforce the psychosocial characteristics of adolescents. It enables adolescents to cope with the ever-changing needs of society, respond to opportunities and gather relevant information. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2000 and National Curriculum Framework 2005 identified learning as an isolated activity. It reflects that education is not able to link knowledge with real life. The literature review on Life skills is basically an attempt to answer the question- Why Life Skills need to be mandatory in the curriculum of secondary school students?

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Life skills education is important to adolescents, as it can help them transition successfully from childhood to adulthood through healthy development of social and emotional skills without much conflict with the environment. Life skills help adolescents to make informed decisions, communicate effectively and develop coping and self-management skills that may help an individual to lead a healthy and productive life. It has been recommended that life skills education be integrated into educational programmes by educational bodies like CBSE etc. The idea of life skills education is supported by National Curriculum Framework (2005). Further, the changing needs of the professional,

social, cultural, and economic life of humans demands an education that develops a complete personality rather than focusing on the academic aspect only. The research work in this field has been increasing in recent times. But still, there is a need to develop a comprehensive programme to realize the idea of life skills education.

CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

For the literature review, an inclusion criteria comprising six points was adopted which was inspired by systematic literature reviews conducted earlier by De Vries, Bekkers, and Tummers (2016). These are:

1. **Centrality of Topic:** Articles and Documents with the focus on Life skills-based education and its effect on adolescents were reviewed. Even articles including ways to develop life skills in adolescent were selected.

2. **Respondents:** As the literature review focused on the development of an instructional package for inculcating life skills in adolescents so only those articles were included in which adolescents are the respondents.

3. **Study Design:** All study designs (descriptive, experimental, Survey etc.) were allowed to be included for the purpose of the review.

4. **Year of Publication:** All studies were selected that were published during 2010 to 2020.

5. **Language:** Articles and documents searched and selected were in English language only.

6. **Publication Status:** To maintain quality of the literature review the studies published in International and National peer reviewed academic journals were selected.

Selection Process

The following Articles (as shown in Table 1) were shortlisted to be included in the literature review:

Table 1
Selected Articles for Review of Literature.

No.	Title of the Article	Author	Source	Year of Publication	Methodology/ Tools	Context/ Participants
1.	Life Education for Adolescents - Indian Experience	Vranda, M & Rao, M	Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology	2011 (Vol.37, Special Issue, 9-15)	Narrative Review	Adolescents under various education Programmes
2.	A Study of Core Life Skills Of Adolescents In Relation To Their Self Concept Developed Through School Life Skill Programme	Khera, S & Khosla, S	International Journal of Social Science & Interdisciplinary Research	2012 (Volume1 Issue 11)	Descriptive Study /Self made test of Core life skill comprising of 50 statements covering of ten areas of core life	Adolescent students of South Delhi

Continued on next page

Table 1 continued

3.	Life Skills Education for Secondary Education	Mahmoudi, A & Moshayed, G	Life Science Journal	2012; 9(2)	Descriptive and narrative review	Attempts should be made to understand the adolescent, and to safeguard, protect and guide him/her. The Family Life & Life Skills Education Programmed is a good support system for adolescents at the community level.
4.	Importance Of Life Skills Education for Youth	Dinesh, R & Belinda, R	Indian Journal Of Applied Research	2014 (Volume 4 Issue 12)	A Qualitative Study	The main focus of the study was Implementation of Life Skills program for Youth in Schools and Colleges will reduce the problems of Young Minds.
5.	Impact of Life Skills Education on Adolescents in Rural School	Parvathy, V & Renjith, R	International Journal of Advanced Research	2015 (Volume 3, Issue 2)	Experimental Study/ Questionnaire developed by investigator	Coastal area school in the taluk of Karunagapally, Kerala, India

Continued on next page

Table 1 continued

6.	Implementation Aspects of Life Skills Education Program in Central Board of Secondary Education Schools	Behrani, P International Education & Research Journal	2016 (Volume 2 issue 3)	Survey	The objectives of this paper were: 1. To study the Life Skills Education Programs in CBSE schools. 2. To study the problems of teachers and administrators in implementation of life skills education programs.
7.	Need Assessment for Life Skills Based Education Among School Going Adolescents In Mysore	Vidya, G.S, Kavitha, H.S, Kulkarni, P & Renuka M	July 2016	A cross sectional Study	To assess the knowledge regarding life skills among adolescents High school children (adolescents) in Mysore city

Continued on next page

Table 1 continued

8.	Development of the life skills scale for adolescents and adults	Bannai, K.T, Kurara, O & Imura, K	Shinrigaku Kenkyu	2016(Vol. 87 issue 5)	Survey	The main focus of the study was for measuring the life skills needed for a satisfactory social life for a wide range (based on sex and/or age) of Japanese adolescents and adults. 500 Japanese adolescents and adults.
9.	Assessment of life-skills of adolescents in relation to selected variables	Dhingra, R, Chauhan, K.S	International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications	2017 (Volume 7, issue 8)	Descriptive Studies	School going boys and girls (14-16 years) of classes VII, IX & X were randomly selected from randomly selected schools of five Zones of Delhi Municipal council

Continued on next page

Table 1 continued

10.	An Exploratory Study On Life Skills Intervention And Its Impact On The Study Skills Among Young Adolescents	Daisy P.J. & Nair, R	International Journal of Innovations in Engineering and Technology (IJJET)	2018 (Volume 10 Issue 3)	Quasi-experimental design/ Study Skill Inventory	The study was conducted among the urban adolescents in Ghaziabad district of UP studying in CBSE stream
11.	A Qualitative Research Study on the Importance of Life Skills on Undergraduate Students' Personal and Social Competencies	Nair, P.K & Fahimirad, M	International Journal of Higher Education	2019 (Vol. 8, No. 5)	A qualitative research approach using an in-depth interview and self-reporting of the life skills module	The participants were randomly selected among freshman undergraduate students who have passed the life skill modules at Taylor's University, Malaysia

Continued on next page

Table 1 continued

12.	Mindfulness, Life Skills, Resilience, and Emotional and Behavioral Problems for Gifted Low-Income Adolescents in China	Chung, H & Huiying, J	Frontiers in Psychology	in 2020 (Volume 11)	Descriptive Study To check the structural equation of mindfulness and Life skills / 152 adolescents from a specialized school for low-income and gifted students in Guangzhou, China
13.	Effectiveness of life skills education programme on disadvantaged adolescents	Lakshmana, G. Gayathri, V. Channaveer, R. M.	Indian Journal of Social Work	2020 (Volume 81 issue 1)	Experimental Study / Life skill Module of World Health Organization This study explores the effectiveness of life skills education among disadvantaged adolescents/ 222 adolescents from rural and urban areas of Karnataka.

Continued on next page

Table 1 continued

14.	A chatbot-based coaching intervention for adolescents to promote life skills: Pilot study	Gabrielli, Rizzi.S, Carbone.S, Donisi.S& Valeria	JMIR Human Factors	2020 (Volume 7 issue 1)	Experimental Study	To promote mental well-being in adolescents. 20 secondary schools students were the sample.
15.	Life Education Creative Productive Citizens	Saravana A.R.	Journal of Critical Reviews	2020 (Vol 7, Issue 9)	Narrative Review	Studies from 2004 to 2013

From the data in Table 1, we can see that there has been a remarkable development in the field of life skills in the past few years. Still, further research is needed to provide a systematic and holistic instructional package which can enhance and strengthen the role of life skills among adolescents' development in a successful manner. [Vranda and Rao \(2011\)](#) suggested preparing adolescents for global success through training in Life Skills. [Dinesh and Belinda \(2014\)](#) found that the implementation of the Life Skills programme can reduce the problems of young minds. [Dhingra and Chauhan \(2017\)](#) found a highly significant correlation between parental education and the levels of life skills of adolescents, further fortifying the notion that education plays a crucial role in making parents aware of the needs of their children. [Nair and Fahimirad \(2019\)](#) concluded that embedding the life-skills program in the university curriculum plays a central role in shaping students' personal and social competencies. [Chung and Huiying \(2020\)](#) highlighted that mindfulness and life skills were associated with heightened resilience. [Lakshmana et al. \(2020\)](#) suggested that life skills training must be an ongoing process and can be a component of the school curriculum. Thus, the present paper focuses on the importance of life skills education and the benefits of imparting life skill education in our curricula i.e., developing social, emotional, and thinking skills in students, as they are the important building blocks for dynamic citizens, who can cope up with future challenges, and survive well. From the above review, Life skills programmes in India focused on rural area adolescents both school-going and dropouts.

The following Official Documents (as shown in Table 2) were shortlisted to be included in the literature review:

Table 2

Selected Official Documents for Review of Literature.

No.	Official Document	Source	Year	Central Theme
1.	Strengthening Life Skills for Youth A Practical Guide to Quality Programming	The World Bank	2014	In life skills training method of delivery is important with curriculum itself.

Continued on next page

Table 2 continued

2.	Mapping Life Skills In India: Research, Policy & Practice	Dream a Dream	2018	Conceptual Approaches to Life Skills, Life Skills Research and Measurement in India, Life Skills Policies in India, Life Skills Implementation in India, research design and methods must thus address the benefits of a life skills approach from the early formative years of a child to young adulthood.
3.	Global Framework on Transferable Skills	UNICEF	2019	Effective skills development includes careful selection and alignment of curriculum and content, appropriate pedagogical practices, and authentic and continuous assessment of learner skills. There is an urgent need to expand, rethink and transform education and learning systems to provide all children and adolescents, especially those who are marginalised and in conflict and emergency settings, with quality learning opportunities that include the skills they need to succeed in school, work, and life.

Continued on next page

Table 2 continued

4.	Comprehensive Life Skills Framework	UNICEF	2019	Life skills are a complement and not a substitute to foundational skills like reading and mathematics and the two must be integrated. Education with life skills as its integral component will only improve the opportunities for young people and improve their life chances and options. These are to be re-envisioned and addressed as per dynamic needs of the 21st century.
5.	Life Skills Education school handbook	World Health Organization	2020	This handbook laid stress on the Action Planning adapted from the continuous improvement process model. It included school vision, rules and environment.

[World Health Organisation \(2020\)](#) suggests that the five major risk factors of adolescents i.e., nutrition, hygiene, physical activity, smoking and alcohol can be reduced by implementing life skill-based education. [UNICEF \(2019\)](#) suggested the development of life skills on multiple pathways such as formal, non-formal and community-based. [World Bank \(2014\)](#) strengthens the idea to enhance life skills among youth through non-formal education. From the review of the above documents, it is clear that there has been extensive research on aspects of child adversity and its impact on children, namely, the role of life skills in improving learning outcomes and the role of Life Skills in improving life outcomes. There is very little research done from a developing country context and from looking at the extent, depth and complexity of adversity from an Indian context. There need to be pertinent research questions asked across academia, from policymakers and practitioners and we need to build a body of knowledge seeped in evidence to inform further research, policy and implementation strategies.

CONCLUSIONS

There is a dire need to open up the arena of Life skills with lots of training modules to cater for the need of the target group (adolescent learners/ Secondary school students). This will help 21st-century adolescents to lead a skilful life within a positive framework and their personalities can be developed accordingly. It is clear from the review that knowledge, skills and values learnt from life skills education facilitate a healthy transition to adulthood and will add merit to life skills education programs in diverse contexts. Examining adolescent experiences within the embedded culture of the individual is important to understand how individuals from different backgrounds construct life skill knowledge into reality.

Life skill-based education be provided to adolescents to promote psychosocial skills. It helps adolescents to think about future goals with critical thinking. It can help them to avoid unplanned decisions. These challenges must be addressed, in our mind, to transform the current research, policy, and implementation work on life skills in India such that it resonates with the need of the young to overcome adversity and flourish as citizens of 21st-century India.

REFERENCES

- Chung, H., & Huiying, J. (2020). Mindfulness, Life Skills, Resilience, and Emotional and Behavioral Problems for Gifted Low-Income Adolescents in China. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00594>
- Dhingra, R., & Chauhan, K. S. (2017). Assessment of life-skills of adolescents in relation to selected variables. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, 7*(8), 201-212.
- Goudas, M., Dermizaki, I., Leondari, A., & Danish, S. (2006). The effectiveness of teaching a life skills program in a physical education context. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 21*(4), 429-438.
- Kazemi, R., Momeni, S., & Abolghasemi, A. (2014). The effectiveness of life skill training on self-esteem and communication skills of students with dyscalculia. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 114*, 863-866.
- Lakshmana, G., Gayathri, V., & Channaveer, R. M. (2020). Effectiveness of life skills education programme on disadvantaged adolescents. *Indian Journal of Social Work, 81*(1), 17-32. <https://doi.org/10.32444/IJSW.2020.81.1.17-32>
- Menrath, I. (2012). Evaluation of school-based life skills programmes in a high-risk sample: A controlled longitudinal multi-centre study. *Journal of Public Health, 20*(2), 159-170.

- Nair, P. K., & Fahimirad, M. (2019). A Qualitative Research Study on the Importance of Life Skills on Undergraduate Students' Personal and Social Competencies. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 8(5), 71-78.
- Naseri, A., & Babakhani, N. (2014). The effect of life skills training on physical and verbal aggression male delinquent adolescents marginalized in karaj. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116, 4875-4879.
- Roodbari, Z., Sahdipoor, E., & Ghale, S. (2013). The Study of the Effect of Life Skill Training On Social Development, Emotional And Social Compatibility Among First- Grade Female High School In Neka City. *Indian Journal of Fundamental and Applied Life Sciences*, 3(3), 382-390.
- UNICEF. (2002). *Annual report*. New York: Division of Communication, United Nations.
- UNICEF. (2006). *Annual report*. New York: Division of Communication, United Nations.
- UNICEF. (2019). *Global framework on transferable skills*. New York: United Nations.
- Vicary, J. R., Henry, K. L., Bechtel, L. J., Swisher, J. D., Smith, E. A., Wylie, R., & Hopkins, A. M. (2004). Life skills training effects for high and low risk rural junior high school females. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 25(4), 399-416.
- Vranda, M., & Rao, M. (2011). Life Skills Education for Young Adolescents - Indian Experience. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 37(9), 9-15.
- World Bank. (2014). *Strengthening Life Skills for Youth A Practical Guide to Quality Programming*. (International Youth Foundation)
- World Health Organisation. (1993). *Life skills education in schools*. Geneva: WHO.
- World Health Organisation. (2020). *Life skills education school handbook: prevention of noncommunicable diseases - approaches for schools*. Geneva: World Health Organisation.
- Yadav, P., & Iqbal, N. (2009). Impact of life skill training on self-esteem, adjustment and empathy among adolescents. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 35, 61-70.