

## LIFE SKILLS AMONG SCHOOL GOING ADOLESCENTS IN RELATION TO CERTAIN PERSONAL VARIABLES

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*The present study aims to assess the life skills among school going adolescents in relation to gender, locale, parental education and parental occupation. The sample consisted of 200 school going adolescents studying in government and private schools of Patiala, Fatehgarh Sahib and Mansa districts of Punjab. Life skills scale (Sharma, 2003) and the background information sheets prepared by the investigator herself were used to collect the data. The findings revealed that female and rural school going adolescents possess more life skills than their counterparts. School going adolescents whose fathers and mothers are less educated possess significantly more life skills than their counterparts. School going adolescents who have business as parental occupation possess more life skills than their counterparts. Results of the study further revealed that school going adolescents whose mothers are non-working possess significantly more life skills than those with working mothers.*

**KEYWORDS:** Life Skills, School Going Adolescents, Personal Variables

### INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a time of moving from immaturity of childhood into the maturity of adulthood. As the adolescents mature cognitively, their mental processes become more analytical. They are now capable of abstract thinking, better articulation and of developing an independent ideology. These are the years of creativity idealism and spirit of adventure. It is the stage of their personality development. Adolescents are the true assets of every nation. We

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have to use their potential for the development of the nation and education is that vehicle which can be used to nourish them, use their strength and potential for the betterment of the society. Sharma (2011) focused that “one of the most important concerns of education is to ensure that child is able to make use of most of his abilities and capabilities to achieve to his maximum level”. As children grow from infancy to adolescence and young adulthood, they need to learn many kinds of skills. Language, reading, writing and mathematics are considered the most basic of the skills children must master. They also need to learn skills associated with work, income generation and money management. One best practice model for contributing to the healthy development of adolescents is a life skills approach. Life skills education facilitates complete and integrated development of individuals to function effectively as social being. The circular issued by CBSE states that: “adolescence is a time of immense creative energy, self-discovery and a desire to explore the world. Children can be fraught with feelings of isolation, loneliness and confusion. Lessons in life skills help in the holistic development of children and its significance cannot be ignored”.

## **LIFE SKILLS**

Life skills are considered as an effective tool to promote pro-social behaviour and correcting behavioural disorders. It is a set of psycho-social skills which are seen as socially acceptable learned behaviour that enable individuals to interact in ways that elicit positive responses and assist in avoiding negative responses from them. About 40 years ago, the efforts started to increase the life skills of the people indirectly and thereby to optimize the human resource development. While launching the literacy programmes, it became very clear that the classroom education method would not work up to the expectation. Therefore, it took a shift from the classroom style to the situational context of the learner and improving his life situation. This was the turning point where the applicability of education and literacy was understood to help people develop better life skills and livelihood (Nair, 2010).

Life skills are abilities; individuals can learn that will help them to live a fruitful life. In other words life skills are those competencies that assist people in functioning well in the environments in which they live. Life skills are defined as non-academic abilities, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that must be learned for success in society (Junge et al., 2003). According to Hendrick (1996), “Life skills are skills that help an individual to be successful in living a productive and satisfying life”. According to WHO (1997), “Life skills are the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”.

Life skills are innumerable and the nature of life skills is likely to differ across cultures and settings. WHO (1997) described the various life skills as Decision Making, Problem Solving, Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Effective Communication, Inter-Personal Relationship Skills, Self-Awareness, Empathy, Coping with Emotions and coping with stress.

Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities i.e. "what to do and how to do it. Life skills have produced the following effects: lessened violent behaviour; increased pro-social and decreased negative, self-destructive behaviour; increased the ability to plan ahead and choose effective solutions to problems; improved self-image, self-awareness, social and emotional adjustment; increased acquisition of knowledge; and improved constructive conflict resolution with peers, impulse control and popularity (Francis, 2007). Adolescents with low level of life skills are known to develop high-risk behaviour which lead to long lasting health and social consequences (Sharma, 2003). Life skills education lays the foundation for learning skills, which have a greater demand in job market. Life skill education enhances self-direction of the individual (Francis, 2007).

#### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Bhave (2002) conducted a study on innovative method of life skills training programme. Results showed that life skills training programme had immensely benefitted the students in dealing with the issues such as prevention of risk behaviour related to sex, HIV/ AIDS and holistic prevention of life style associated diseases.

Junge et al. (2003) examined the development of life skills within a sample of kindergarten through sixth grade students enrolled in 4-H after school programmes. Results of retrospective pre/post-surveys indicate that children enrolled in the programme showed life skill gain over time, and that gains on specific life skills differ as a function of age, gender, and ethnicity.

Sharma (2003) conducted a study to assess the levels of life skills in adolescents of a secondary school of Kanthmandu. Results revealed that maternal education was significantly associated with higher life skill levels in adolescents. Connectedness and family support were other important factors influencing the level of skills in the adolescents.

Papacharisis et al. (2005) investigated the effectiveness of teaching a life skills program among all the Greek citizens. The results of the study indicated that young athletes who participated in the program (i) demonstrated greater knowledge about life skills (ii) indicated higher self beliefs for personal goal setting, problem solving, and positive thinking (iii) performed better in

volleyball and soccer skills than athletes in the control group.

Madnawat et al. (2007) investigated the effect of life skills and gender on psychophysical well being and coping response among 200 adolescents. It was found that life skills and gender creates a significant main and interactive effect on physical well being, value and creativity, emotions, relations, life management and coping except that there is no significant main effect of life skills and gender on psychological well being and total physical well being.

Jones (2010) showed that students need technical and academic skills as well as the ability to think and work collaboratively with others. Career education must begin in middle school or earlier to allow students time to develop the aptitudes, skills and attitudes necessary to develop an awareness of their chosen career.

Chan et al. (2011) studied the interrelationships among teacher care, students' life skills development and academic achievement of Hong Kong junior secondary students. Findings indicated that teacher care is a significant factor contributing to all domains of students' life skills development and to their academic achievement. Comparing the students' gender difference on the influence of teacher care, findings reflected that the impact of teacher care on male junior secondary students is less significant.

Rao et al. (2011) analysed the importance of Life Skills Education (LSE) in terms of behaviour modification of juvenile delinquents. Interactive and participatory methods were adopted for the training. Results showed that life skills programme helped them to strengthen their personalities. Behavioural changes are happenings among the boys who were trained and criminal propensity came down and morality increased.

The main purpose of the study conducted by Amirian (2012) was to examine the effect of life skills education on academic achievement on first high school male students. The study assessed the impact of training problem-solving skills, self awareness and coping with stress skills and the impart of these three methods together on students' academic achievement. Based on the results of research it can be said that teaching the problem-solving, self-awareness, coping with stress skills separately and these three factors together have an impact on students' academic achievement and there are significant difference between the effectiveness of the experimental groups.

Gomes and Marques (2012) examined the effects of a training programme on students' acquisition of life skills, life satisfaction, life orientation and expectations about academic achievement. Results showed that students who received the intervention reported having more developmental experiences

related to life skills, greater life satisfaction and a stronger tendency to be optimistic. Expectations about academic achievement were higher for the intervention group before and after the intervention.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

In the present study, focus is on life skills among adolescents and its relationship with certain personal variables such as gender, locale, parental education, and parental occupation. Adolescents are considered as the most productive members of the society, due to their physical and intellectual capacity. Global and societal changes have influenced the lives of adolescents and these changes are likely to affect them in the future as well. The rapid social change, consequent upon modernization, urbanization, globalization and the media boom, has made the lives of adolescents' people, their expectations, values and outlook very different from those of older generation. Developing life skills helps the adolescents to translate knowledge attitude and their health behaviour such as acquiring the ability to reduce specific risk behaviour and adopt healthy behaviour that improve their lives in general (Francis, 2007).

India is the youngest nation of the world. This demographic dividend has raised high expectations with regard to the youth's meaningful participation in socio-political process particularly civic engagement. As the young people step into the threshold of the external world, they are increasingly influenced by their peers and by adults other than their parents. They begin to explore and experiment intellectually, ingeniously and socially through various activities. To support them in this sensitive and tender stage, they need to develop life skills- skills in negotiation, conflict resolution, critical thinking, decision-making and communication. This would help them to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, assertiveness and the ability to work in teams and resolve conflicts in a rational manner (Rao, 2011).

Imparting life skills is the basic attempt that has to be initiated for strengthening the behaviour of adolescents and elders. Acquiring these basic skills will modify the behaviour and character of the adolescents. Effective acquisition of life skills can influence the way one feels about oneself and others and can enhance one's productivity, efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence. .

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To study the gender differences in life skills among school going adolescents.
2. To study the location wise differences in life skills among school going

adolescents.

3. To study the life skills among school going adolescents in relation to parental education.
4. To study the life skills among school going adolescents in relation to parental occupation.

### **HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY**

Following are the hypotheses of the study :

1. There will be no significant gender differences in life skills among adolescents.
2. There will be no significant location-wise differences in life skills among adolescents.
3. There will be no significant differences among adolescents in relation to parental education.
4. There will be no significant differences among adolescents in relation to parental occupation.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted using the survey method of research.

### **TOOLS USED**

The following tools were selected and used by the investigator in the present study:

#### **1. Life Skills Scale**

A Life skills scale (Sharma, 2003) was used to measure life skills among school going adolescents. It is a 31 item scale which covers all the different areas of life skills viz. self awareness, empathy, interpersonal relationship, communication, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, coping with stress and coping with emotions.

#### **2. Background Information Sheet Prepared by the Investigator**

This was used to seek information of students on the personal variables of, Gender i.e. male and female, Location i.e. urban/rural, Parental education (Paternal and Maternal) was considered on two levels i.e. highly educated (graduation and above), low (literate, higher secondary and senior secondary), Paternal occupation was considered on two levels i.e. service and business and maternal occupation was considered on two levels i.e. working and non-working.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Gender Differences in Life Skills Among School Going Adolescents.

The results in Table 1 show the means and SD scores of life skills along with t-value testing the significance of gender differences in life skills among adolescents.

**Table 1**

#### Gender Differences in Life Skills among School Going Adolescents.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>
Male	105	115.8	15.85	2.17*
Female	95	120.35	13.73	

\*Significant at 0.05 level

It can be seen from Table 1 that mean life skills score of the male school going adolescents came out to be 115.8 with SD of 15.85 as compared to the mean score of female school going adolescents, which turned out to be 120.35 with SD 13.73. The t-value testing the significance of mean difference in life skills of male and female school going adolescents came out to be 2.17 which is significant at 0.05 level. This shows that there are significant gender differences in life skills among school going adolescents. Female school going adolescents possess significantly more life skills than male school going adolescents. These results are in line with the findings of Pools and Vans (1989), Klingman (1998), Junge et al. (2003), Alwell and Cobb (2009), Bharath and Kumar (2010) Forneris et al. (2010) who concluded that females possess more life skills than males.

### 2. Location-Wise Differences in Life Skills Among School Going Adolescents.

Results in Table 2 shows the mean and SD scores of life skills along with t-value testing the significance of location-wise differences in life skills among school going adolescents.

**Table 2**

#### Location-Wise Differences in Life Skills among School Going Adolescents.

Location	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>
Urban	85	115.63	16.14	2.60**
Rural	115	120.08	13.71	

\*\*Significant at 0.01 level

It can be seen from the Table 2 that the mean life skill score of urban school

going adolescents came out to be 115.63 with SD 16.14 as compared to the mean score of rural school going adolescents, which turned out to be 120.08 with SD of 13.71. The t-value testing the significance of mean difference in life skills of urban and rural school going adolescents came out to be 2.60 which is significant at 0.01 level. It means that there are significant location-wise differences in life skills among adolescents. Rural school going adolescents possess significantly more life skills than urban adolescents. The results of the study can be seen in the light of findings of Liao et al. (2010).

### **3. Life Skills Among School Going Adolescents in Relation to Parental Education.**

Life skills among school going adolescents in relation to parental education are discussed separately in terms of paternal and maternal education.

#### **3.1 Life Skills among School Going Adolescents in Relation to Paternal Education.**

Table 3 shows the means and SD scores of life skills along with t-value testing the significance of mean differences in life skills among adolescents across high and low levels of paternal education.

**Table 3**

#### **Life Skills among School Going Adolescents in Relation to Paternal Education.**

<b>Level of Paternal Education</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t</b>
High	95	115.8	15.86	2.16*
Low	105	120.35	13.73	

*\*Significant at 0.05 level*

Results in Table 3 show that mean life skills score among school going adolescents with higher level of paternal education is 115.8 and those with lower level is 120.35. The SD values of life skills are 15.86 and 13.73 respectively. The t-value came out to be 2.16 which is significant at 0.05 level. This indicates that there are significant differences in life skills among school going adolescents across high and low level of paternal education. It may be further mentioned that the school going adolescents whose fathers are less educated possess significantly more life skills than their counterparts whose fathers are highly educated. It may be attributed to the fact that school going adolescents with highly educated



fathers are more dependent upon them whereas school going adolescents with less educated fathers are more independent and mature.

### **3.2 Life Skills among School Going Adolescents in Relation to Maternal Education.**

Table 4 shows the mean and SD scores of life skills along with t-value testing the significance of mean difference in life skills among adolescents across high and low levels of maternal education.

**Table 4**

#### **Life Skills among School Going Adolescents in Relation to Maternal Education.**

<b>Level of Maternal Education</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t</b>
High	108	115.51	15.98	2.84**
Low	92	121.32	12.94	

*\*\* Significant at 0.01 level*

Result in Table 4 shows that the mean life skills score among school going adolescents with higher level of maternal education is 115.51 as compared to 121.32 for adolescents with lower level of maternal education. The SD values of life skills are 15.98 and 12.94 respectively. The t-value turned out to be 2.84 which is significant at 0.01 level. This indicates that school going adolescents with lower level of maternal education possess significantly higher life skills than their counterparts with higher level of maternal education. It may be attributed to the fact that school going adolescents with highly educated mothers are more dependent upon them whereas adolescents with less educated mothers are more independent and mature.

### **4. Life Skills Among School Going Adolescents in Relation to Parental Occupation.**

Life skills among school going adolescents in relation to parental occupation discussed separately in terms of paternal and maternal occupation.

#### **4.1 Life Skills among School Going Adolescents in Relation to Paternal Occupation.**

Table 5 shows the means and SD scores of life skills along with t-value testing the significance of mean difference in life skills among school going adolescents across service and business as paternal education.

**Table 5****Life Skills among School Going Adolescents in Relation to Paternal Occupation.**

Paternal Occupation	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>
Service	92	115.91	15.77	1.99*
Business	108	120.13	13.93	

\* Significant at 0.05 level.

Results in Table 5 indicate that the mean life skills score of school going adolescents in service category is 115.91 with SD of 15.77 whereas the mean life skills score of school going adolescents in business category is 120.13 with SD of 13.93 respectively. The t-value testing the significance of mean difference in life skills came out to be 1.99, which is significant at 0.05 level. This shows that there are significant differences in life skills of school going adolescents whose fathers are in service or doing business. School going adolescents who have business as paternal occupation possess significantly greater life skills than their counterparts whose fathers are in service. This may be because of the fact that school going adolescents who are belonging to business families get more exposure and market orientation in their family environment as compared to their service counterparts.

**4.2 Life Skills among School Going Adolescents in Relation to Maternal Occupation.**

The Table 6 shows the mean and SD scores of life skills along with t-value testing the significance of mean difference in life skills among adolescents in relation to maternal occupation.

**Table 6****Life Skills among School Going Adolescents in Relation to Maternal Occupation.**

Maternal Occupation	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>
Working	118	116.02	15.61	2.57*
Non-Working	82	121.30	13.33	

\*Significant at 0.05 level

It is evident from Table 6 that the mean life skills score of school going adolescents with working mothers is 116.02 with SD of 15.61 and the mean life

skills score of non-working mothers is 121.30 with SD of 13.33 respectively. The t-value testing the significance of mean difference in life skills came out to be 2.57, which is significant at 0.05 level. It is clear from the Table 6 that those school going adolescents whose mothers are non-working possess significantly greater life skills than those with working mothers. This may be because of the fact that non-working mothers devote more time towards skill development among their children than their working counterparts.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is clear from the results that females and rural school going adolescents possess significantly more life skills than their counterparts. It may be mentioned that school going adolescents whose fathers and mothers are less educated possess significantly more life skills than their counterparts. School going adolescents who have business as paternal occupation possess significantly greater life skills than their counterparts whose fathers are in service. School going adolescents whose mothers are non-working possess significantly greater life skills than those with working mothers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Life skills program should be introduced in schools. Three primary skills i) interpersonal behaviour ii) self-related behaviour iii) task-related behaviour must be taught in life skill programmes.
2. Adolescents health education programs should be included to provide adolescents with basic information on sexuality and reproductive health a major achievement.
3. Male Students need technical and academic skills as well as the ability to think and work collaboratively with others.
4. Teachers should help in introducing life skills programme so that adolescents change their behaviour.
5. Teachers should be provided with knowledge and skills to impart life skill education to the adolescents and to enable them to deal with adolescents having high-risk behaviour, specially counselling skills.
6. Life skills should be made examinable to encourage both students and teachers to take it seriously. More resources should be provided to create an enabling environment for teaching life skills.

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