

## COMPETENCY AND IMPORTANCE OF LIFE SKILLS FOR THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF VOCATIONAL STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines the significance of life skill-based education in improving the quality life of students. Through this paper, the author addresses the issues that are faced by adolescents at higher education levels, specially focused on vocational trainee students. Vocational training courses like polytechnic and ITIs are designed towards the destination of enhancing employability in the country. Most of the youth in the country are provisioned to employment through these courses and students are in great need to learn life skills to progress through their careers. The objective of the study is to investigate the potentiality of life skills that students should acquire to withstand personal and professional lifestyles and to learn a balanced way of approach to excel in their careers. Life skills teach students with great psychological devolution that aids people, to face the troubles of their day-to-day existence with a remarkable way of thinking and go about with their daily obligations effectively. To cope with the growing tempo and changes of this advanced era, life skills are an important area that needs to be taught in the education, especially in the polytechnic curriculum. Keeping the present Indian context in mind, the paper tries to explore the avenues that can be used to develop life skills among adolescents. It also briefs on the benefits of life skills in the psychological development of students and methods of teaching life skills.

**Keywords:** Vocational Education, Psychological Development, life skills.

### Introduction

Change is the only certainty of life and it is the law of life. People who take change as a challenge are the ones who can succeed in their life. Adaptability to change is also a big life skill that is an essential component of one's personality. Today's society has changed a lot so as the educational system, culture, and civilization of people. In order to address the dynamism of contemporary society, students should learn new things like how to deal with stress and distress. The type of jobs most of the youth are choosing are industry-based where they should have the capacity to effectively manage and address the challenges they encounter.

Life skills refer to a set of abilities and competencies individuals possess, which are necessary to effectively navigate and overcome the various problems encountered in daily life responsibilities efficiently. Education in life skills guide us towards the dual highway to growth and development, allowing us to live as effectively and expeditiously. To be competent to manage challenges of everyday living in a constantly changing environment, it is needed to possess skills to resist the existing competency. The awareness of life skills itself is the foundation to all other subjects and knowledge.

### Significance And Impact Of Life Skills

Liberalization, privatization, and globalization have helped us to get a deeper discernment for other cultures. Despite this transfer of knowledge and awareness, one should aim for a broad grasp of life skills. Value education and psychology aren't the only sectors where "life skills" are getting a lot of attention but personality development is emphasized; The process of acquiring life skills is as essential as the learning core content of education in fact the very purpose of education itself is to bring the best in personality development. Stimulating new abilities is challenging in the beginning, and it needs a significant amount of perseverance and encouragement from others.

The demand towards life skills is increasing day by day due to technological development, changes in the work environment, globalization, and a customer-driven market. To cope with the increasing pace and trend, students now a days need new life skills such as the ability to deal with stress .

Present-day education develops knowledge ,but it does little to develop skill sets. There is no use for knowledge that multiplies without proper skills. Adolescence is a critical phase of transition and development, serving as a transitional time between childhood and maturity. It is also the stage when young people extend their relationships beyond parents, family and they are intensely influenced by their peers and outside world in general ,which is also characterized by rapid physiological changes and maturation. This phenomenon is distinguished by rapid physiological transformations and maturity. Adolescence is a crucial juncture in an individual's lifespan,with an increasing opportunities towards growth and development, to face various challenges and risks.

Adolescence is a turning point in one's life, it's a period of increased potential but also one of great vulnerability. This is the main incubation phase, Students undergo many emotional and physical changes in their adolescent stage in shaping their personalities, particularly students studying vocational education in polytechnic and ITIs are stepping backward in shaping their personalities due to lack of proper guidance. Life skills can build the bridge between their ambiguity of unfair state of psychological changes and strong abilities subsequently leading to a healthy and productive life. Life skills promote mental well-being in personal actions directed to others, and actions to change the surroundings that influence our whole evaluation of mental and physical well-being.

### **The Objective Of The Study**

Life skills make people unique from their contemporary or peer group. Those who possess leadership qualities , communication skills, problem-solving, and teamwork are preferred in most recruitments.

The main objective of this paper is to propagate relationship between life skills and students' psychological development which ultimately leads to personal efficacy and success in life. Incorporation of life-skills program into curriculum of Indian education system has significant impact on development of student's personal and social capabilities. This is an exploratory paper, findings in this paper have important implications to educational policymakers, regarding integration of life skills into curriculum in order to influence students' professional and interpersonal skills.

### **Literature Review**

Life skills empower people to be adaptable, engage with the environment, and encourage autonomy. Core competencies, known as personal and social skills, are a variety of intellectual, social, personal, and emotional abilities essential for development of deep learning and lifelong learning. Those with life skills are more able to adapt, interact with their surroundings, and promote self-control. The World Health Organization (WHO) provides a variety of skills as a list they are effective communication skills, interpersonal relationships, empathy, decision-making, problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, and self-awareness; It has been observed that these skills are attainable and manageable. They aid people in overcoming social difficulties such as sadness, anxiety, loneliness, rejection, rage, and conflict (Greco, Baer, & Smith, 2011). Many researchers have focused on the exploration of these issues (Sobhi-gharamaleki & Rajabi, 2010). Smith (2004) performed research with 500 active participants to determine the impact of instruction in life skills on pupils. Findings suggested that training in life skills improved mental, physical health of participants and had a substantial impact on management and leadership abilities of adolescents. Instruction on life skills thought students the abilities to manage negative emotions such as failure, anxiety, depression, and stress.

According to research conducted by Smith (2011) training in life skills dramatically reduced alcohol and drug usage among students. According to Sukhodolsky's (2004) research, training in coping skills or soft skills has a good effect on interpersonal interactions and behavioral issues; hostility also decreases significantly among participants (Sukhodolsky, Kassinove, & Gorman, 2017). In addition, Mishara and Ystgaard (2006) students who learned how to handle stress were happier and, as a result, felt less pressure throughout their studies (Naseri & Babakhani, 2014)

According to Willingham (2007), from a psychological standpoint, life skills are fundamentally connected with domain knowledge; hence, they are very discipline-specific (Lai, 2011). Nonetheless, it demonstrates the requirement for a unique skill set for each subject and life skill.

According to Matsuda and Uchiyama (2006), they trained university students on problem-solving techniques through participating in group activities and found that teaching 'skill set' can guide them on how to deal with difficult circumstances and considerably increased students' personal and social capabilities. As a result of training, students learned to deal with distorted perception, inadequate emotional response, stereotypical behaviors.

According to Sagone & Indiana (2017), life skills are psycho-social and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions (decision-making), solve problems (problem-solving), think critically and creatively (critical and creative thinking), communicate effectively (efficacy communication), build healthy relationships (interpersonal relationships), get involved with others (empathy), know themselves, recognize feelings as irrational (self-awareness), and get involved with others (interpersonal relationships)" (2017, p. 2229).

De Caroli and Sagone (2014) examined the kinship between generalized self-efficacy and psychological well-being in a sample of highly and low efficient Italian adolescents and observed a significant and positive relationship between self-efficacy, personal development, and self-acceptance.

Therefore, this study intends to analyse the impact of life skills training program on students' growth in academic achievement and social competency skills.

### **Life Skills And Psychological Development Of Students**

Counseling psychology has been concerned with promoting development and competence since at least the mid-1970s when Super (1977) outlined distinctions between counseling and clinical psychology as the difference between education and medicine. Positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Sheldon & Ryan, 2011) has increased interest in strength-based methods. The Life Development Intervention model (LDI; Danish & D'Augelli, 1983; Danish, D'Augelli, & Ginsberg, 1984), defines counseling psychology into one frame, based on the life span of human development.

Life Development Intervention (LDI; Danish & D'Augelli, 1983; Danish, D'Augelli, & Ginsberg, 1984), emphasizes on self-directed transformation and concentrating on future, with a grasp of what has to be done in the present to achieve one's best potential future. Yet, LDI is more than just a conceptual framework for understanding process of positive transformation; it also outlines an intervention technique based on a psycho-educational approach. This method is a skills-based education model that promotes positive growth, particular purpose of LDI is to enhance chances of success by improving personal ability via teaching life skills (LS) (Danish & Forneris, 2008). The major implication of this paper is to enhance, extend the need for LS interventions in the psychology development of students.

**Danish, Forneris, Hodge, and Heke (2004)** described life skills, as the abilities that allow people to succeed in many situations in which they live, such as school, home, and communities. Life skills may be behavioral (communicating successfully with peers and adults) or cognitive (making sound judgments); interpersonal (being assertive).

LDI is based on a life-span human development perspective, it emphasizes on progressive growth and alteration (Danish & D'Augelli, 1983). Since change is sequential, it is necessary to consider any period of life within the context of what has happened in the past and what will happen in future. As change occurs in one's life, it may result in problems or crises, but the results are not necessarily negative. It is during these life "changes" that life skills (LS) programs focused on autonomy, competence, and relatedness can be the most effective.

### **Basic Elements Of Life Skills**

Life skills are the qualities, diverse learning elements which include knowledge, understanding, skills, aptitudes and values that allow people to face the obstacles of daily life with a positive attitude and to carry out their daily challenges effectively. These are intrinsic, essential abilities that enable us to tackle the challenges we face every day. Life skills are the collection of mental and practical aptitudes that help us to deal with the ups and downs of daily living, and fulfill our tasks with grace and poise. These abilities are the bedrock of our being and are what enable us to deal with the challenges we face every day. They include self-assurance, assertiveness, capacity to make wise judgments, ability to effectively navigate the demands and obstacles of everyday life. Teaching and learning life skills can be a comprehensive approach to behavior modification that focuses on the development of life skills such as communication, goal setting, positive attitude, managing emotions, stress management, interpersonal skills, creativity, problem-solving, decision making, leadership skills, team spirit, peer pressure resistance, relationship skills, and adding new values to behavior. Life skills include psycho-social, competitive and interpersonal skills that help people make informed discussions solve

problems, think critically and creatively. These life skills are innumerable in number and they are required from womb to tomb. They differ across time, culture, resources, and setting. World Health Organization (WHO - 1999) is aimed at development of psycho social skills that are required to deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

According to WHO, the core set of life skills can be divided into three kinds

1. Cognitive skills
2. Emotional skills
3. Social skills.

Cognitive	Emotional	Social
Creativity, Critical thinking, Problem-solving Decision Making	Coping with emotions Empathy Coping with stress of daily life Self awareness	Effective communication Interpersonal skills

Table 1 : Core set of life skills categories

Although these three pillars of competence have such a broad influence on everyday life, each of it include a vast array of specialized skills. Each skill in detail discussed below.

1. Critical thinking is an ability to think, analyze information, experience in an objective way in order to understand the logical connection between ideas. It helps to Identify, and construct evaluate an argument on reflection of one's own beliefs and values. critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognize and assist factors that influence attitudes and behaviors.
2. Creative thinking is a new way of looking at things or doing with characteristic of four components, fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration. Creative thinking is ability to look at things differently and find new ways of solving problem.
3. Problem solving involves specific process of defining problem, determining the root cause of the problem, and implementing the best solution. It helps us to deal constructively with every problems in our lives, problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strength.
4. Decision making is the selection of a appropriate solution from among two or more possible alternatives to arrive at a solution to a problem. It helps us deal constructively with decisions about our lives. It can teach people how to actively make decisions about their actions.
5. In a healthy assessment of different options and what effects these different decisions are likely to have, self-awareness includes recognition of one's own strengths and weaknesses, desires, and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us recognize and introspect when we are stressed or under pressure. It is often a prerequisite for effective communication and interpersonal relationships, as well as for developing empathy for others.
6. Empathy is necessary to have a successful relationship with people around us and society at large extent. We need to understand and care about other people's needs, desires, and feelings. Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person. Without this quality of empathy, our communication with others will amount to one-way traffic. Empathy can help behavior towards people in need of care, assistance, or tolerance.
7. Coping with emotions means recognizing emotions in ourselves and others. Being aware of how emotions influence behaviour and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions like anger or sadness can have negative effects on our health if we do not respond appropriately.
8. Coping with stress means recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how stress can affect and effect us, and acts in ways that help us control our levels of stress by changing our environment or lifestyle and learning how to relax.
9. Communication skills are that able us to express ourselves effectively both verbally and non-verbally in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations. This means being able to express opinions and desires, as well as needs and fears, and it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.

10. Interpersonal relationships help us relate in positive ways with the people we interact with. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well-being. It means keeping good relationships with family members, able to end relationships constructively which are an important source of social support.

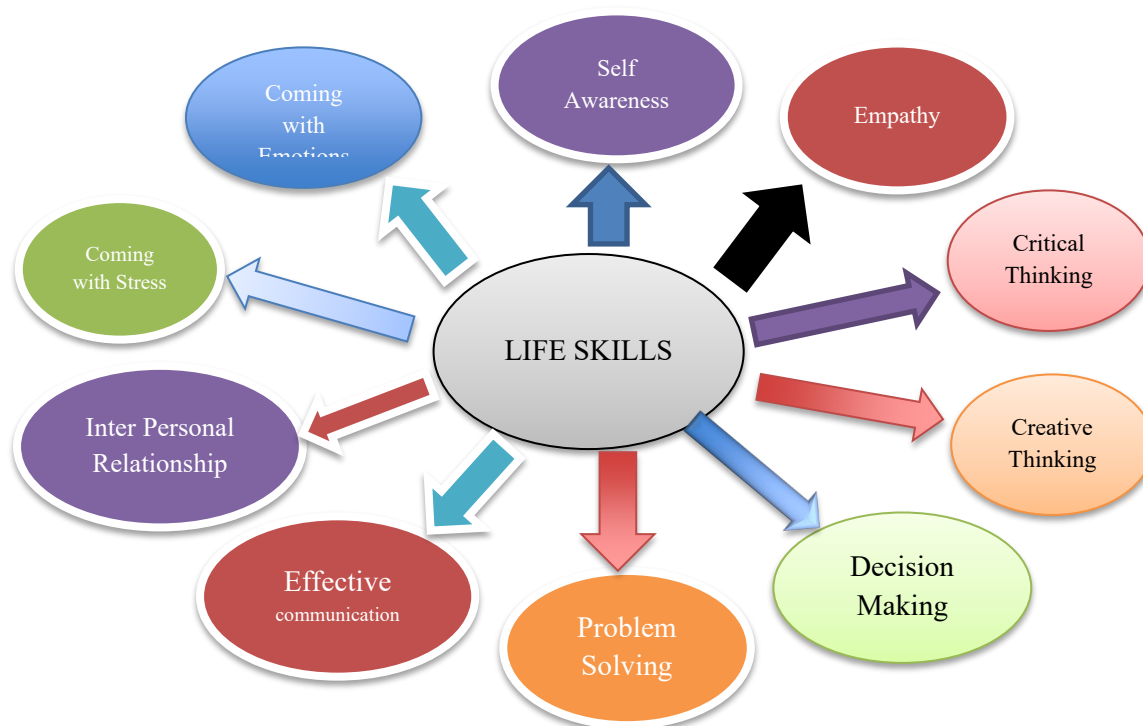


Fig 1: Lifeskills

### Life Skills In Education

Now the problem is how and why we should teach life skills. Our education system is kind of informative and knowledge-based, skill sets are not taught. Moreover, our nuclear family system has left no scope for getting exposure to life skills. Post-covid teaching has affected the life skills and mindsets of young students. Technically students are getting bright but their skills are zero. Students are gathering information from technology but do not have skills to process it in their everyday progress. Especially students from polytechnic institutions are lacking these life skills.

Life skills training is an effective strategy in inspiring youth to act responsibly, take initiative, and take charge. It is predicated on the premise that when young people are able to rise above the emotional impasses caused by their daily conflicts, entangled relationships, and peer pressure, they, are less likely to engage in antisocial or high-risk behavior. However, the age range predominantly from 10 to 18, all children and adolescents must teach life skills in a nurturing learning environment. Children and adolescents are the target group because this age group appears to be the most susceptible to drastic and wild behavior changes. Youth, especially technical students in vocational education, can only acquire these skills if they are able to learn, practice life skills in a peer- and family-supported environment that fosters self-assurance in their daily lives. Education in life skills provide a framework and methodology for children to participate in a variety of societal events and facilitates their participation. Life skills training is an effective tool for empowering youth to act responsibly, take initiative, and take control.

Life skills are imparted in a supportive learning environment for children and adolescents of all ages. However, fostering life skills of emotional intelligence goes beyond academics and into the area of psychological welfare by teaching pupils' interpersonal skills, resilience, and stress management. Emotional intelligence, therefore, could be viewed as a skill-set of primary importance within the life skill competencies, as it covers both factors of success and personal development, including academic achievement, employment, and relationships. Hence, emotional intelligence might be seen as a talent of main relevance within the life skill competencies because it encompasses both success and personal development variables, such as academic accomplishment, employment, and relationships. Emotional intelligence aids people in overcoming adversity and problems in a variety of life domains and is an essential component of any life skills program. Including components of these life skills in



the curriculum is strongly recommended. It is stated that educators have a duty to assist students in building personal efficacy in connection to their everyday lives and particular beneficial qualities. Even if the primary goal of education is to prepare students for professional roles this research presented improves students' professional readiness which is possible only if one can bridge gap between skill sets required in the workplace and in academia by providing a platform for students to broaden their own personal efficacy on how they manage their emotional intelligence to advance their personal and social competency, a factor that leads to academic and professional success. Educators have responsibility in helping students develop personal efficacy in relation to their daily lives and their individual personality traits.

### How Are These Life Skills Imparted?

Unfortunately, there is no course that could teach life skills in detail. Since majority of approaches used in life skills are based on social learning theory and what we know about how young people learn from their surroundings. Observing how others behave and reflections of their actions. Teaching life skills involves the process using four basic components.

1. Practical activities
2. feed back and reflections
3. Consolidation and reinforcement
4. Practical application to day to day life challenges.
5. Peer educators approach

Different methods that can be used to enhance life skills in students, most effective form of learning life skill in education are active learning (learning by doing), interactive, relevant, critical and collaborative.

- ❖ Active learning - emphasize learning by doing
- ❖ Interactive - uses discussion and debate
- ❖ Relevant - focuses on real life issues facing young people and society
- ❖ Critical - encourages young people to think for themselves
- ❖ Collaborative - includes group work and collaborative learning

### Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to strengthen and expand conceptual framework for LS interventions beyond lifespan development intervention framework (Danish & D'Augelli, 1983). Nevertheless, development of life skills of emotional intelligence extends beyond the realm of academics and into the domain of psychological health. Emotional intelligence is an essential component of any programme that teaches life skills, and it is the responsibility of educators to assist students in development of personal efficacy in relation to both the aspects of their personalities that make up their daily lives and the aspects of their lives that are unique to them. Bridging gap between the skill-sets required in the workplace and in academia has been shown to improve students' professional readiness. It has also been proven that giving students a place to develop a sense of mastery over their emotional intelligence through life skills and social competence leads to greater professional preparedness.

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