

**Assessment of Life-Skills Among College Students In Relation to Individual and Social -  
Environmental Level Protective Factors**

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***Abstract***

The objective of the present study was to assess the life skill of adolescents. The sample consisted of 52 adolescents who were studying first year undergraduate students from deemed university, Chennai, Tamil Nadu. T-test was used for analysing the data and the result of the study identified the individual level protective, family level protective, socio-environment level protective, extra-curricular and reinforcement factors are fostering the life skills of students. Life Skills prepares the adolescents to face any challenges, problems or situation in life and provides a holistic development for adolescent health and overall social development.

*Key words:* life skills, reinforcement, protective factor.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Life skills are essentials for every one that help in promoting mental well-being and competence in young people to deal with the various situations in life. Moreover life skills are our behaviours and feelings that influence our ability to communicate with our society. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), life skills education refers to a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address the balance of three areas- knowledge, attitude and skills. World Health Organization defines life skills as: "abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (1993) (World Health Organization, 2001).

Life skills are innumerable, and the nature and definition of life skills are differ according to our culture and surroundings. Moreover set of skills that are at the heart of skills-based initiatives for the promotion of the health and well-being of children and adolescents. Life skills are shaped by our various intra-personal and inter-personal skills that determine our ability to adjust in a particular socio-cultural framework, and it can be grouped into following eight basic qualities that form the framework of one's life skills.

- Emotional maturity and stability (including empathy, self-motivation and self-initiation)
- Decision-making
- Leadership skills
- Team playing skills

- Problem-solving skills
- Communication (including listening and assertiveness) skills
- Negotiation skills
- Adaptability

Adolescence is most demanding period of one's life- its storm and stress period because accurate portrayal of self to others, during this period. This period adolescents need social and emotional support, acquisition of skills essential to cope with difficult situations and deal with their peer pressure effectively. so life skills are essentials for them to overcome their confusions and develop healthy personality.

## **2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To assess the individual level protective factors among adolescents.
2. To assess the social-environmental level protective factors among adolescents.
3. To assess the proportion of students participating in extracurricular activities.
4. To assess the proportion of students with perceived positive reinforcement.

## **3. METHOD**

### **3.1 Study Design**

A mixed – method study using both quantitative cross sectional survey design and qualitative in-depth interviews was undertaken.

### **3.2 Sample and sampling strategies**

Since this was an exploratory study, entire adolescents aged 18-20 years were considered for the study. Purposive sampling was done for in-depth interviews. The sample of the study comprised of 52 adolescents who were studying first year under graduate students

### **3.3 Tools used in the study**

#### **3.3.1 Life skills assessment scale**

Life skill assessment scale is constructed with all the ten domains in WHO framework for life skills, self-awareness, empathy, critical and creative thinking, problem solving skill, decision making, communication skills, interpersonal relationship, coping with emotions and stress. Scale is based on the theories of human development which also consist of social learning theory and risk and resilience theory (Subasree and Nair, 2014).

Life skill was measured, using life skill assessment scale (LSAS) by sumitha. T.S.(2016). The scale consisted of forty five questions with ten domains. - self-awareness (six questions), empathy(five questions), communication skill(four questions), interpersonal

relationships(five questions), critical thinking (five questions), decision making (four questions), problem solving skills(four questions), coping with emotions(five questions), coping with stress (four questions) and creative thinking (three questions). Of these forty five questions, sixteen were with negative scoring. Each question was given a score ranging from 0 to 2.

### **3.3.2 Predictor variables**

Protective factors are conditions or attributes in individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that mitigate or eliminate risk in families and communities, thereby increasing the health and well-being of children and families.in the present study, to analyse the students positive outcomes, individual level, family level and social environmental level protective factor were taken along with other two factors namely Extracurricular activities, and reinforcement . Hence Predictor variables are classified into five categories.i.e.

- Reinforcement: Child's perception about deserving appreciations that he or she receives, help in managing difficult subjects and encouragement for talents and hobbies.
- Individual level factors: Literacy, success in recent exams and self-grading of their studies, with a particular goal, depend on the adult staff and friend to share thoughts
- Family level factors: This includes being in touch with relatives and parental encouragement.
- Social-environmental level factors: Includes material resources, encouraging and understanding teachers, interaction with neighbouring children, liking school, and children who had given concluding remarks and children knowing child rights.

## **4. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

**Table 1 Life skill index and individual level protective factors (N= 52 )**

<b>Protective factors</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t value</b>	<b>P value</b>
Literacy	Cannot read and write	33.14	13.487	2.215	0.031*
	others	43.97	17.497		
On self-grading studies	Very good	45.13	16.653	2.735	0.009**
	others	32.70	14.477		
Success in recent exam	yes	35.43	15.215	2.578	0.013*
	others	47.14	16.989		
A friend to share thoughts	Yes	38.09	17.245	1.194	0.238
	others	43.89	15.916		

Can depend on the adult staff	Yes	42.74	15.621	0.954	0.345
	others	38.21	17.798		
Having a particular goal	Yes	33.75	13.086	2.310	0.025*
	others	44.45	17.827		

**Note . \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$**

The above result (table -1) shows that, students who are good in literary knowledge and self –grading studies have better life skills. Because social Medias like newspaper, etc., are playing major role in promoting better life skills i.e. problem solving, creative and decision making skills. Because approximately 73% of adolescents were used social media (Lenhart et al., 2010). It was supported Marina Ivanović (2014) that adequately conceived media literacy can contribute to adopting many social values. Another similar study shows, Social media also provides convenient ways of peer-to-peer exchange of knowledge and collaboration (Eid & Al-Jabri, 2016). Moreover It emphasize that students who had succeed in all examination and having more than one goal, were having good life skills. one of the reason is Continuous success of examination are developing students' coping with stress and self-awareness skills.

**Table 2 Life skill index and social-environment level protective factors (N= 52)**

Protective factors	Categories	Mean	SD	t value	P value
Encouraging teachers	yes	35.69	15.043	2.318	0.025*
	others	46.27	17.515		
Understanding teacher	yes	35.43	15.215	2.578	0.013*
	others	47.14	16.989		
Interacts with neighbouring students	yes	43.94	16.723	2.554	0.014*
	No	31.40	13.953		
Know about students' rights	Yes	38.38	18.051	0.806	0.424
	No	42.20	15.610		
Life the school / institution	Yes	43.73	16.719	2.521	0.015*
	others	31.07	13.837		

**Note . \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$**

The table -2 reveals that, students who were getting the encouragement from others except teachers were having better life skills. Moreover it shows that, students who had met or visited their relatives often were having good life skills. One of the reasons is, social skills develop self-confidence and communication skills The students who were liking their

institutions most, were having better life skills because schools/institutions were making the students to involve more activities or programmes like N.S.S, Scouts , Red Cross etc., which is developing the students interpersonal skills and communication skill. This finding is in concordance with other research showing other positive effects include improved school attendance (Zabin et al.,1986), less bullying, fewer referrals to specialist support services and better relationships between children and their parents.

**Table 3- Life skill index and extracurricular activities (N= 52 )**

Protective factors	Categories	Mean	SD	t value	P value
Additional reading	yes	42.80	16.329	2.130	0.038*
	No	31.00	16.062		
play	yes	60.67	16.502	2.250	0.029*
	No	38.98	5.132		
take part in activity-talents and hobbies	yes	40.62	17.612	0.331	0.742
	No	38.56	13.371		
Leisure time activity	Any activity	45.54	16.556	2.193	0.033*
	No activity	35.56	15.861		

**Note . \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$**

The table – 3 emphasizes that, students who were reading apart from their curriculum and playing various games were good in life skills. This findings supported by the study which is showing it increase of psychological health and that they have an important role in the prevention of psychological diseases and behavioural problems (Nori, 1998). In addition, it reveals that, students those who were participating various activity in their leisure time, were also having good life skill. Because games and recreational activities are reducing one's stress, depression and promote physical and psychological well-being, in addition, it's increasing their productivity levels.

**Table 4- Life skill index and reinforcement (N= 52 )**

Protective factors	Categories	Mean	SD	t value	P value
Someone to encourage talents and hobbies	yes	36.94	15.967	2.151	0.036*
	No	47.50	16.908		
Receive deserving appreciations	yes	42.94	16.965	1.719	0.092
	No	34.38	15.466		
Receives help in difficult subject	yes	37.13	15.364	2.683	0.010**
	No	51.64	17.767		

**Note . \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$**

The table -4 shows that students who were encouraging their self or having self-motivation and those who were not receiving help from others (i.e. tuition, special class etc.,) even for their difficult subjects also having better life skills. Because students became independent on their own learning, they are good in decision making skills, problem solving ability and intrapersonal skills. Similar findings of another study shows that decision making, problem solving and recognizing personal values are among the contributing factors that help students promote their mental health, develop their cognitive skills, academic attainments and prevent behavioural disorders (Crismore, 1984; Misra and Castillo, 2004; Zhao and Kuh, 2004;)

## **5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

The result of the study revealed that life skills index seems to be better in students individual level productive factors i.e. who could read and write, self-grading studies, not only success in recent examination, having multiple goals and in social-environment level protective factors like, encouraging & understanding by others not only the teachers, interacts with neighbouring students, i.e. their schools/ institutions, in extra-curricular activities factors i.e. additional reading, involving in play, involving recreational activities and in reinforcement factors i.e. students who had encourage their self and self-study. Despite these findings with a friend to share thoughts, depend on the staff, take part in activity, talents and hobbies, receiving appreciation were not better life skills with respect to the compared group.

This study identified the protective factors which is fostering the life skills. Life Skills prepares the adolescents to face any challenges, problems or situation in life and provides a holistic development for adolescent health and overall social development. It also empowers adolescents to make positive and effective decisions in their life.

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