



## Measuring Life Skills of School Going Adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

*Adolescence is the transition period from childhood to adulthood and many adolescents experience anxiety, confusion and difficulty in their preparation for adulthood. It is through life skills they will solve their problems, manage situations and cope up with a range of stressors. This study explores the effect of age and gender on life skills among adolescents in Kerala, India. Surveys were administered to 484 male and 487 female students (N = 971) to assess life skills. The finding in the study suggests that there is no gender or age difference in life skills among school going adolescents.*

### KEYWORDS : Life skills, Adolescents

#### Background of the study

Adolescence is a developmental stage defined by enormous growth and often confusing. Adolescents experience in dispensable changes in their biological, cognitive and emotional functioning as they develop the ability to integrate new thought, outlooks and a sense of themselves in relation to their environment. (Allen & Land, 1999). Adolescents develop independence, a new sense of identity, a moral opinion, as well as amplified capacity for closeness and sexuality with others. Mental health issues can emerge during adolescence due to the rapid rate of change and transition. They may also experience greater turmoil and difficult in achieving appropriate developmental tasks. Research evidences suggests that individuals who do not develop the ability to cope with stressful events during childhood and adolescence are prone to frequent depression, loneliness, school failures, poor relationship, attachment issues etc. (Crisp & O' Donnell, 1998, Prelow, Weaver and Swenson (2006), Grotherg, 2003). For educators and Psychologists, these findings can be devastating and discouraging. People working with adolescents always wanted to help the challenged children to "bounce back" from difficult time.

Researchers, practitioners and educators are looking for appropriate intervention to help adolescents to bounce back from difficulties. Life skills approach is one such intervention which assists young individuals to gain control over their behaviours and take informed decision that can lead to positive values. Life skills approach is an interactive educational methodology that focuses on acquiring like communication, negotiation, stress management etc

Life skills are the skills that enable an individual to succeed in the environment in which they live. (Van der Merwe, 2009) Life skills include all aspects of living necessary for adolescents to adjust, adopt and cope. Life skills are very crucial that will help the adolescents to become more resilient. By providing adolescents with sufficient life skills people working with adolescents can make them more resistant to fare life hardships. (Jansen A.N.B (2011).

#### Methodology

The aim of this research is to assess the levels of life skills in adolescents between the age group of 13 to 18 yrs.

#### Objectives:

- 2) To study whether the adolescent life skills differ depending on their gender.
- 3) To study the difference in life skills of adolescents depending on their age groups

The specific hypotheses of the present study are:

Male and female adolescents differ significantly in their life skills  
There is a significant difference in the score of life skills of adolescents on the basis of their age.

A sample of 971 school going adolescents (*Male=484, Female=487*) were selected using systematic random sampling procedure from five schools which are randomly chosen locality in Kerala. The main instrument used Tools were employed to gather new facts or to explore new fields. Life skills assessment scale (LSAS) developed by Nair.R.A.et.al was used for the data collection. It is a standardized questionnaire having reliability of 0.84 and validity 89%. The multi-dimensional Life skills assessment scale consists of 100 items in the form of statements in built with a 5 point scale for the respondent to check the appropriate response which is most descriptive of him/her. It has both positive and negative items. The scale measures 10 dimensions of life skills such as Self-awareness, Empathy, Effective Communication, Interpersonal Relationship, Creative thinking, Critical Thinking, Decision making, Problem solving, Coping with emotions and Coping with stress. The added advantage is that the scale could be self-administered or could be utilised in a group situation. The Life skills assessment scale is a self-administration scale. And it is based on the five point scale ranging from Always true of me to Not at all true of me. It has both positive and negative items. The reverse score is carried out for the negative items. The total of each dimension score indicates the raw score of the respective dimension. The sum of all the scores obtained under each of the 10 dimensions would evolve the Global Score of life skills. In addition to this scale a demographic data sheet to assess gender and age was also provided. Data was collected in class room setting with the informed consent of the adolescents. To answer the objectives, an independent *t*-test with a two-tailed test of significance and one way ANOVA was employed.

#### Result and Discussion

##### Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for life skills by Gender

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	S.D	SEM	df	t value
Life Skills	Boys	484	328.23	25.156	1.143	969	.048
	Girls	487	331.68	29.119	1.320		

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the score of life skills between boys and girls. Results of the two-independent samples *t*-test shows that mean life skills score do not differs between boys ( $M = 328.23, SD = 25.156, n = 484$ ) and girls ( $M = 331.68, SD = 29.119, n = 487$ ). Hence it is clear that life skills score do not differ by gender ( $t=.048, df= 969$ ). However, when the mean scores on life skills of boys and girls are compared, it is found that girls have comparably more life skills than boys. The result suggests that gender really does have an effect on life skills, rejecting the main hypothesis.

**Table 2 Mean and SD of scores of Life skills obtained by the respondents classified on the basis of Age Groups**

Variable	Groups	Number	Mean	SD	Std Error
Life skills	Below 14	367	328.85	25.425	1.327
	14 to 16	360	328.61	28.341	1.498
	Above	244	333.63	27.946	1.789

**Table 2.1 of One way ANOVA for life skills by Age**

Source of Variation	df	Sum of Squares	Mean square value	F value	Sig
Between Groups	2	4385.994	2192.997	2.964	.052
Within Groups	968	716262.672	739.941		
Total	970	720648.665			

To test the hypothesis that age group has a significant on life skills, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted. There were no statistically significant differences between age groups and life skills as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(2, 968) = 2.964, p = .052$ ). The result suggests that age really does have an effect on life skills, rejecting the main hypothesis.

**Discussion**

This research tries to explore the role of age and gender on scores of life skills for school adolescents. The result suggests that gender really does have an effect on life skills. The result of the studies is against the studies that discussed the gender-specific behavioural characteristics at primary school age, such as girls having a more positive level of social emotional development and a higher level of caring relations with adults and peers and social support than boys (Sun & Stewart, 2007, Anuradha.K, 2014). It was also found that there is no significant difference between different age groups and life skills. The results from the current study indicate age does not have an impact of life skills.

**Implication, Limitations and Conclusions**

There is limited research into the age and gender effect on life skills among school going adolescents and this paper provides an attempt to study this important area. But, some limitations are apparent. First, on the basis of the sample examined in this study, findings are limited on life skills in the particular culture. Cultural differences cannot be ruled out. Second, life skills have been assessed by a self-report questionnaire. Finally, however, the results of this study support the multidimensional operationalization of life skills. Thereby, inconsistent findings of studies examining effects of age and gender on life skills can be partly explained by methodological differences. Finally, findings permit further investigations of the interaction effects of age and gender on life skills. Adolescence is the transition period from childhood to adulthood and many adolescents experience anxiety, confusion and difficulty in their preparation for adulthood. It is through life skills they will solve their problems, manage situations and cope up with a variety of stressors. Adolescents with low levels of life skills are known to develop high risk behaviours which lead to long lasting health and social consequences. Many countries across the world have introduced life skills education in the school curriculum or for adolescents in special situations

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