

Voices of Life Lecture Series

Lecture #5

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Observation of

World Mental Health Day

Date: October 17, 2025

Online Platform: Zoom

Organised by: Indian Association of Life Skills Education (IALSE) and Smt. Maniben M.P. Shah Women's College of Arts and Commerce (Mumbai)

In Collaboration With: H.L. College of Commerce (Ahmedabad)

Theme: Life Skills as a Prerequisite for Mental Health – Empowering Mental Health through Life Skills Development

EVENT REPORT

The Voices of Life Lecture Series is an initiative of the Indian Association of Life Skills Education (IALSE) that equips individuals with essential life skills and promotes holistic wellbeing. The term ‘Voice of Life’ embodies a beacon of hope, education and empowerment, aiming to amplify voices of resilience, purpose, and positive change. By undertaking this initiative, IALSE seeks to empower individuals to resist harmful temptations, make positive choices and create a culture of positivity and resilience.

The fifth lecture of the Voices of Life Lecture Series was held on October 17, 2025, in observance of World Mental Health Day. This event highlights the global effort to improve psychological support and well-being. The lecture explored the vital link between developing life skills and maintaining strong mental health.

The session began with an enthusiastic greeting from student compere Ms. Pallavi Joglekar, who described the collaborative effort behind the series. Dr. Mona Kelshikar Pandya, Principal of H.L. College of Commerce, delivered the welcome address, emphasising that life skills enable individuals to handle modern stress and emotional challenges. She then introduced the keynote speaker, Prof. Dr. Baby Shari, highlighting her extensive expertise in psychology and life-skills training.

Dr. A. Radhakrishnan Nair, President of IALSE, delivered the presidential address. He reflected on the ongoing World Mental Health Day initiatives and the importance of life skills in fostering emotional strength.

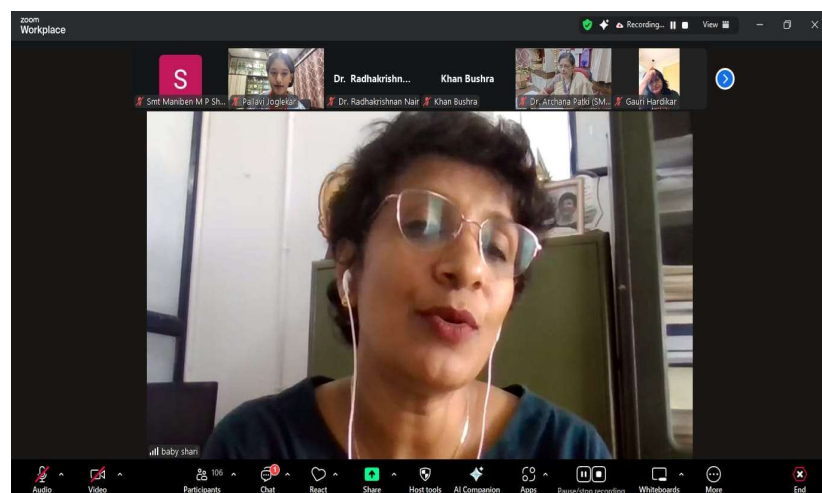
Drawing from his long association with Prof. Dr Shari, he lauded her pioneering work in psychological research, curriculum design, and community programmes. He expressed delight at the diverse participation and anticipated that the talk would bridge life skills with mental health strategies, noting his brief attendance due to prior commitments and entrusting the chair to Dr Gauri Hardikar, Vice President, IALSE.

Dr. Baby Shari, Professor of Psychology at the University of Calicut, delivered a compelling keynote address on life skills as the foundation of mental health. With over 27 years in academia, research, and outreach, including guiding doctoral students and leading disability support projects, she described life skills as lasting abilities that enable effective responses to life's demands, separate from mere knowledge or understanding.

She clarified that knowledge is basic information stored for recall, understanding involves contextual insight through repeated exposure, and skills are practical, adaptable tools for real-world application. Linking these to mental health—defined as a state of emotional, psychological, and social equilibrium—she positioned life skills as proactive buffers against stressors, promoting adaptive coping over reactive fixes.

Central to her discussion was self-awareness, labelled the "mother skill," which sparks introspection, empathy, and cultural sensitivity. She linked it to fostering a scientific mindset, critical analysis, and ethical adaptation in a tech-driven era. Prof. Shari explored mental health influencers, including body perceptions, genetic factors, surroundings, and habits such as physical activity, nutrition, and sleep, urging proactive choices to achieve balance

She advocated nurturing emotional awareness to decode feelings, building resilience via realistic goal-setting and support networks, and enhancing interpersonal bonds to combat isolation. Through interactive examples, she illustrated how these skills transform vulnerabilities into strengths, calling for their



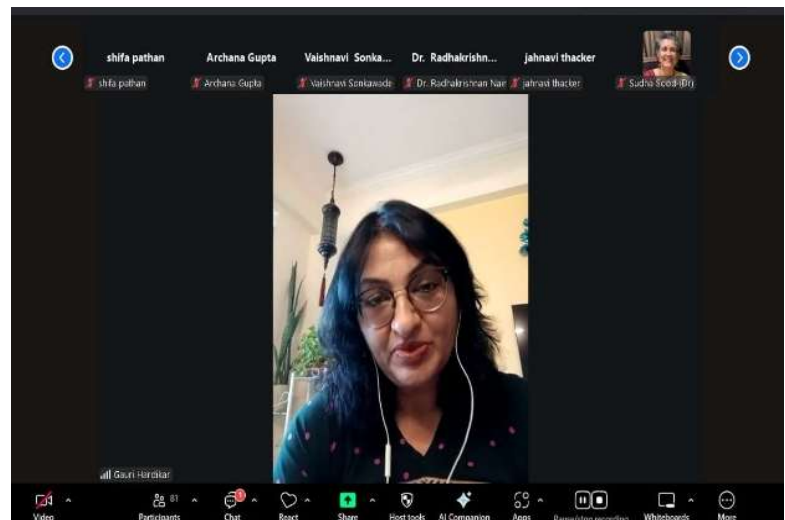
embedding in education to nurture reflective, enduring well-being.

Dr. Gauri Hardikar started the interactive session by asking how thinking skills can reduce self-imposed pressures in academic or personal pursuits. In response, Prof. Shari emphasised the importance of reflective thinking, explaining that it helps individuals examine their expectations, such as perfectionism, and see them as unrealistic. By practicing balanced self-assessment, she said, people can reduce mental strain and develop a healthier sense of self.

The next question examined the role of social skills in combating loneliness in today's digitally connected world. Prof. Shari emphasized that empathy and active listening are essential for building genuine human connections. She mentioned that these skills help create authentic relationships beyond online facades, which are vital for mental recovery, as human bonds provide irreplaceable affirmation.

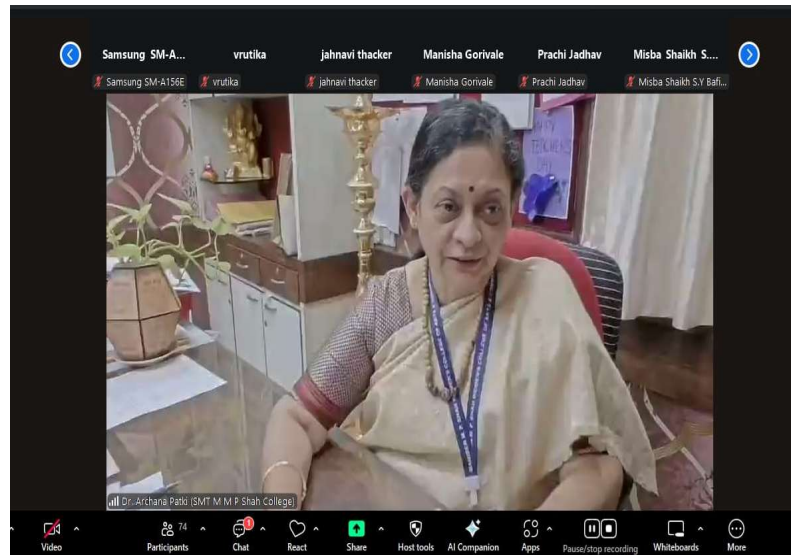
Dr Gauri Hardikar requested that Prof. Shari revisit the poignant boat story from a prior session to illustrate empowerment in crises.

Prof. Shari recounted a tale of a woman adrift after a shipwreck, separated from her husband, and facing threats from a companion. She highlighted the importance of prioritising survival over hindsight judgments. The narrative stressed life preservation as paramount, enabling ethical choices only when secure, and warned against unhelpful advice that risks further harm.



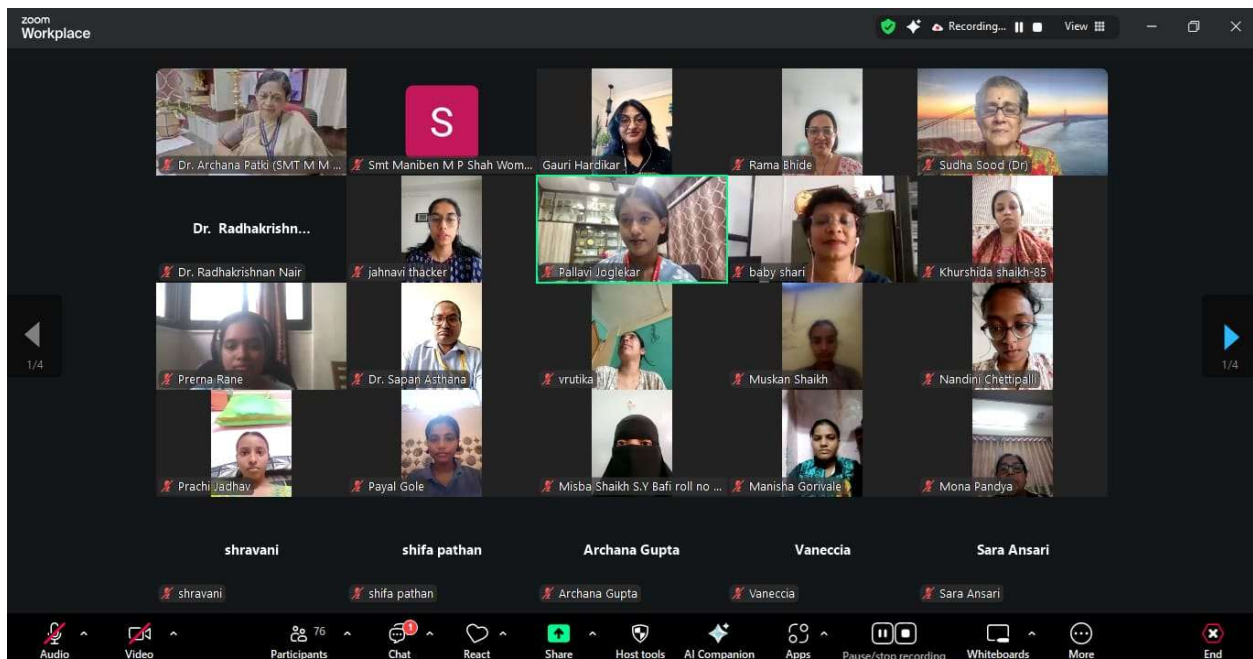
The session was anchored with poise and engagement by Ms. Pallavi Joglekar, whose smooth facilitation kept the virtual gathering connected and lively.

Dr. Archana Patki, Principal of Smt. Maniben M.P. Shah Women's College, delivered the vote of thanks. She conveyed deep appreciation to Dr Radhakrishnan Nair for his visionary guidance and address, crediting him for the series' success. She extended her thanks to Dr Gauri Hardikar for chairing seamlessly and offering reflective insights, and to Ms. Rama Bhide for logistical support. Heartfelt Gratitude went to Dr



Mona Kelshikar Pandya for her gracious hosting despite travel constraints, and especially to Prof. Dr Baby Shari for an enriching delivery that extended beyond the scheduled time, inspiring cross-border attendees. Dr Patki acknowledged Pallavi Joglekar's adept anchoring, Dr Rajani Kanojia's facilitation, and all participants for their participation on a festive morning, and extended Diwali greetings.

This lecture illuminated life skills as dynamic allies in mental health, equipping attendees to embrace challenges with clarity and connection.



Report prepared by:

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