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**INDIAN ASSOCIATION OF LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION**



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION

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## **Life Skills: Improving Perceived Self-efficacy and Resilience among Children Separated from Families**

Mr. Pritam Prasun\*, Ms. Richa Tyagi\*\*, Ms. Ayushi Bhatnagar\*\*\*

### **Abstract**

As per the Multidimensional Poverty Index, released by NITI Aayog in 2021, one in every four Indians was living in poverty. While there are many reasons such as illness, death of parents, divorce, job loss, conflict, a child may end up in a child care institution (CCI) or children's home often due to poverty. It is well established that factors such as poverty, lack of education opportunities, mental health challenges, addiction, peer influence can lead children to situations of vulnerability, family separation and or crime. For systematic and holistic development of these children and families, the socio-legal approach put forth by the Juvenile Justice Act 2021, recognizes that while children need to take responsibility for their behaviour, they also require opportunities to steer their life towards socially constructive ways. In this direction, developing life skills, especially resilience and self-efficacy, among children becomes paramount, which helps them in dealing with destabilisers in their lives and meeting aspiration.

This study examines the effectiveness of life skill training given to the children separated from families for various reasons. The assessment was completed with 136 children, 52 children newly admitted in CCIs and not exposed to LSE, while 84 children earlier admitted to CCIs and were re-integrated back to the family post family strengthening intervention including LSE. With these children, two broad skills, perceived self-efficacy and resilience were measured using standard scales that are tested for this specific age group in multiple contexts including in India. Measurement of perceived self-efficacy reflects that 51% children, who were exposed to Miracle Foundation India's Life skill program have a good level of self-efficacy as compared to 33% children, who were not

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exposed to the same. The organization has been working for two decades in the realm of family strengthening, building agency for children and youth to realize their full potential.

*Keywords: Life Skills, Perceived Self-efficacy, Resilience, Family Separation, Institutional Care, Multidimensional Poverty Index, Best Interest of Child, Family Strengthening. Thrive Scale™ Methodology*

## Introduction

The significance of life skills is paramount in enabling an individual to deal with the complexities of life and have a fulfilling experience in coherence with her/his environment. Children progressing towards adolescence represents one of the critical transitions in the life span and is marked by a tremendous pace of physical and psychological human development and change that is second only to that of infancy (WHO, 2009) [www.who.int](http://www.who.int). Adding a concentric layer to the above scenario is the situation of children who get separated from families, get placed in child care institutions (CCIs) or end up in other vulnerable situations due to family breakdown owing to lack of income, livelihood support, chronic health issues, alcoholism, substance abuse, isolation and family discord, delinquency etc. Being separated from their family is traumatic for a child, the trauma can lead to:

- **Attachment issues** – traumatized children feel that the world is uncertain and unpredictable and may have issues with distrust of people. As a result, they may have difficulty relating to and empathizing with others.
- **Difficulty regulating emotions** – have trouble identifying and communicating feelings, lacking coping skills, cannot control emotions
- **Poor behaviour control** – lack impulse control, self-destructive behaviour, aggression
- **Learning difficulties** – due to inability to focus and concentrate, problems with language development due to changes in brain
- **Low self-esteem, shame, guilt** – and often feel un-loved and rejected by family

All these difficulties lead to struggles throughout their lives. Most of them are unable to utilize their potential in an appropriate way due to lack of guidance and motivation.

The socio-legal approach lens of the Juvenile Justice system in India is not only to provide attention, care, protection to children but also to prevent them getting into crime, vulnerable situations repeatedly. The Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection) of Children Act 2021 emphasises on the components of assessing the areas of child vulnerability and preparing a plan of intervention, working with each individual child and guiding them to take responsibility for their behaviour/action, creating opportunities in the community to enable the children in need of care & protection, or children in conflict with law to re-enter mainstream society (education, training, job, positive relationships with others), opportunities for them to lead productive and law abiding lives, working in collaboration with social workers, legal representatives and other experts as part of the multi-disciplinary teams.

In this sphere, among other enabler, Life skills education plays an indispensable role. It considers psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help children to take right decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with managing their lives in a healthy and productive manner.

### **The Study and its Objective**

Miracle Foundation India has been working for two decades in the realm of family strengthening, family-based alternative care, preventing risk of separation of children in families, transitioning children from institutions back into families, building agency of children and youth to realize their full potential. The organization works with the child protection system: Government, stakeholders, civil society partners and community support structures, youth across different states in the country.

Miracle Foundation India leverages the technical wherewithal of Mission Vatsalya guidelines, JJ Act tools of individual care plan (ICP) and social investigation report (SIR), complemented with the Thrive Scale methodology developed by the organisation which recognizes the critical nature of safety for the child within a family environment across five well-being domains – Family and social Relationship, Education, Physical and Mental Health, Household Economy, and Living Condition. It uses a strength-based approach by focusing on areas in which families are thriving and can be optimized to prevent child separation from family.

As a structured support intervention in the wellbeing domain of education, Miracle Foundation India has developed a comprehensive life skills edu-



cation program (22 modules specific to age groups 5-8, 9-12, 13+) based upon the core set of life skills as identified by WHO (1994) for the promotion and well-being of children and adolescents. The primal understanding was that the practice of these life skills led to an increased sense of competence and positive changes in children's behavior resulting in greater confidence and self-esteem, a healthy, positive lifestyle, and the ability to become self-sustaining citizens of the world community.

The six steps of Miracle Foundation India's approach to learning life skills included:

- Understanding the issues and life skills needed
- Relating issues to the children's own lives
- Practicing skills in a safe and supportive environment
- Applying life skills in real-life situations
- Reflecting on experiences
- Strengthening life skills for further use

The objective of the study was to assess the effectiveness of life skill training (with regard to the parameters of perceived self-efficacy and resilience) imparted to children who experienced family separation. The assessment was carried out with 136 children referring to a time span of one-year 2021 to 2022. Of the total, 52 children were newly admitted in CCIs, yet to be exposed to life skills education, while 84 children having lived in CCIs until they were re-integrated with family following an individualized child centered case management process, with due attention to five well-being domain specific family strengthening intervention including LSE.

## **Literature Review**

Puspakumarag (2013) in his study showed that life skills training was effective in preventing a wide range of problems such as substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, violence Bullying & to promote self-confidence and self-esteem among adolescents.

Sabeen Qamar and Mumtaz Akhter (2020), studied the relationship between secondary school students' self-efficacy and resilience. The study sample was drawn from both genders, and in urban and rural locales. The study found a high level of self-efficacy beliefs in boys in comparison to girls. The same trend was seen while comparing resilience between boys and girls in the sample. The self-efficacy beliefs and resilience of urban students outclassed the rural population. A strong, positive, and significant



relationship between students' self-efficacy beliefs and resilience.

Elisabetta Sagone, Maria Elvira De Caroli, Rossella Falanga and Maria Luisa Indiana (2020) used the Perceived Self-efficacy in Life Skills Scales (PSES\_PE/NE: Empathic Self-efficacy Scale; PSES\_PS: Problem-solving Self-efficacy Scale) and the Resiliency Attitudes and Skills Profile (Italian-RASP) composed of five factors (sense of humour, competence, adaptability, engagement, and control). Results demonstrated that the factors of resilience were strongly (adaptability and engagement) and moderately (sense of humour and competence) related to perceived self-efficacy in the analysed domains; consequently, adolescents who perceived themselves as highly efficient in empathy and in problem-solving were more resilient than those who perceived themselves as lowly efficient in the same domains. Future research should investigate these relations in other life skills expressed by children and adults.

## **Methodology**

The study was a cross-sectional study carried out using in-depth interview tools translated in local language. It was a random selection of 52 children newly admitted in CCIs yet to be exposed to life skills education, as well as a random selection of 84 children having lived in CCIs until they were re-integrated with family. The average age among the 136 respondents was 15 years. Gender wise distribution was 26 percent boys, and 74 percent girls.

For perceived self-efficacy, the General Self-Efficacy scale (Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995) was used. The scale comprises ten statements to assess response on a four-point scale. The statements focus on accomplishment of goals, dealing with unforeseen situations, and finding a range of solutions to a given challenge. Each individual respondent gets a score that can range from 10-40 with 40 being the highest score. For resilience, the Child and Youth Resilience Measure (Liebenberg, L., Ungar, M., and LeBlanc, J.C. (2013) was used. This is a twelve item scale that looks at Individual Personal Skills (like cooperation), Individual Peer Support (the feeling that I am supported by friends), Individual Social Skill (whom to approach for help), Physical Caregiving (the sense of being cared for in terms of physical needs), Psychological Caregiving (psychological support from caregivers), Context or Sense of Belonging. The questionnaire was deployed on the Survey CTOData collection application, data was collected by the team using mobile phone. Thereafter analysis of the data was done basis the perceived self-efficacy and resilience framework.

Results & Discussion

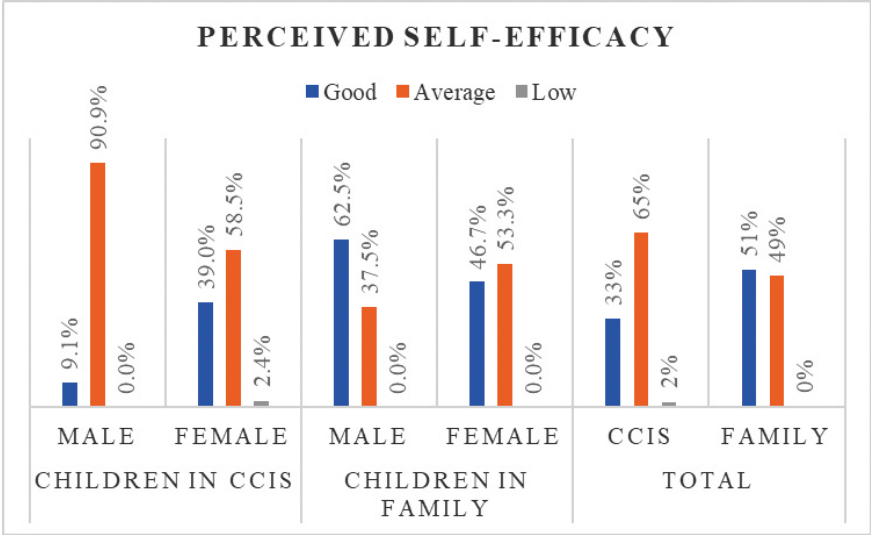


Figure 1: Perceived Self-Efficacy

Figure 1 shows that overall, 44% children had good perceived self-efficacy whereas 55% children had average perceived self-efficacy(See Appendix A for additional data). Among children newly admitted in CCI without exposure to LSE, both boys and girl children exhibited average perceived self- efficacy. Whereas children who were exposed to LSE and further re-integrated with family, both the boys and girl children exhibited good perceived self- efficacy. 51% children in the family had good level of self-ef- ficacy as compared to 33% children in CCIs.

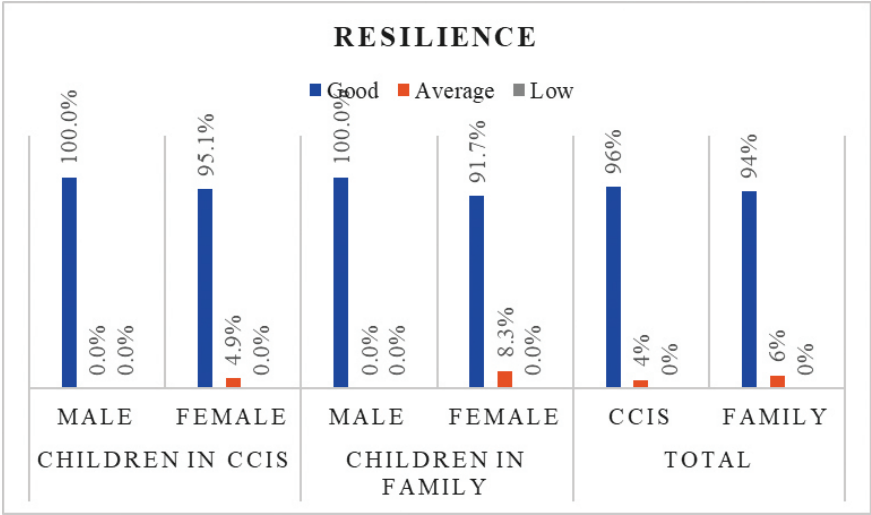


Figure 2: Resilience

Figure 2 shows that overall, 95% children had good resilience scores while 5% children had average resilience scores (See Appendix B for additional data). 100% boy children both in CCI and family had good resilience scores while 4.9% girls in CCI and 8.3% girls in family had average resilience scores.

Adolescence is a pivotal developmental period in which youth begin to form an enduring sense of personal identity and agency about themselves. Self-efficacy is hypothesized to affect individuals' task choices, effort, persistence, and achievement ((Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1995). Compared with learners who doubt their capabilities, those who have high perceived self-efficacy are apt to participate more readily, work harder, persist longer when they encounter difficulties, and achieve at higher levels. The findings reflect that almost half of sampled children have an average level of perceived self-efficacy and proportion of girls falling under this more than boys.

Resilience is defined as “the ability of an individual to function competently in the face of adversity or stress” An adolescent who is resilient is likely to enter adulthood with a good chance of coping well – even if he or she has experienced difficult circumstances in life. The findings reflect that although the average resilience index is good, a significant proportion of children experience lack of resourcefulness in their community and find difficulty in managing emotions during difficult times.

## **Conclusion**

The high perceived self- efficacy among children exposed to life skills education, and now reintegrated with family is indicative of the vital importance of thorough preparation of children as part of the case management process towards a safe and sustainable reintegration with family. Among the five stages of the case management process (intake, assessment, planning & implementation, follow-up /evaluation, case closure), the planning and implementation stage focuses on intervention planning based on the assessed needs, vulnerabilities. Psycho social support, life skills education interventions (self-awareness, problem solving & decision making, expressing emotions, stress management, thinking skills among others) play a critical role in preparing children.

The findings reflect a noteworthy point of strengthening interventions focusing on self-awareness, problems solving and communication skills for girls with a proportion of girls with average perceived self-efficacy, as well as the need for more work on expressing, managing emotions among chil-

dren across the board in the total sample.

The study has certainly opened up scope for further examination, Self-esteem and self-efficacy are inter-related constructs. What a child thinks he/she is capable of achieving is different from what he/she thinks he/she is of worth. A student may be having a high self-esteem level but feel less efficacious in mathematics and science subjects. Similarly, he/she can have low self-esteem but feel efficacious on arts and music.

More empirical research is required to see the relationship between perceived self-efficacy and resilience. Sabeen Qamar and Mumtaz Akhter (2020) states that Individuals with a high level of self-efficacy within a situation perceive tough situations or tasks as opportunities for learning rather than avoiding more difficult matters

**Acknowledgements**

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I extend sincere appreciation to our state heads and research team who extensively worked for training of field staff, monitoring of data processing, reviewing literature, analysis and writing report.

Finally, I would especially like to thank all the respondents of the study for giving their precious time and sharing their experiences.

**Appendix**

Appendix A:

Perceived Self-efficacy	Children in CCIs		Children in Family		Total		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	CCIs	Family	Overall
Good	9.1%	39.0%	62.5%	46.7%	33%	51%	44%
Average	90.9%	58.5%	37.5%	53.3%	65%	49%	55%
Low	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	2%	0%	1%

Appendix B:

Resilience	Children in CCIIs		Children in Family		Total		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	CCIIs	Family	Overall
Good	100%	95.1%	100%	91.7%	96%	94%	95%
Average	0.0%	4.9%	0.0%	8.3%	4%	6%	5%
Low	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0%	0%	0%

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# The Transformative Power of Art: Nurturing Life Skills in Children through Arts

Mr. George Varghese\*

## Abstract

Art, encompassing visual and performing arts, is widely acknowledged for its capacity as a potent tool for self-expression and creativity. Beyond its aesthetic value, art plays a pivotal role in instilling crucial life skills in children, providing them with the essential abilities needed to navigate life's complexities. This paper delves into the multifaceted impact of art on various life skills. Through arts and crafts, students acquire patience, perseverance, and time management skills and nurture their self-esteem and individuality. Moreover, arts and crafts prepare for future careers in a dynamically evolving world, fostering problem-solving and analytical thinking. This educational approach extends beyond the confines of the classroom, encouraging higher-level thinking to explore academic subjects and navigate life beyond school. Ultimately, teaching art empowers students to develop creativity, problem-solving skills, and self-expression. It is essential to give due importance to Arts and Crafts in schools to recognize the transformative power of art and ensure that children have ample opportunities to engage in artistic activities, fostering their holistic growth and equipping them with the skills necessary to thrive in an ever-changing world.

*Keywords: Art, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Children, Self-expression. Life Skills, Problem Solving*

## Introduction

Art, encompassing visual and performing arts, is widely acknowledged for its capacity as a potent tool for self-expression and creativity. Beyond its aesthetic value, art plays a pivotal role in instilling crucial life skills in children, providing them with the essential abilities needed to navigate life's complexities. Through arts and crafts, students acquire patience, perseverance, and time management skills, nurturing their self-esteem and individuality. Moreover, arts and crafts prepare for future careers in a dynamically

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evolving world, fostering problem-solving and analytical thinking. This educational approach extends beyond the confines of the classroom, encouraging higher-level thinking to explore academic subjects and navigate life beyond school. Ultimately, teaching art empowers students to develop creativity, problem-solving skills, and self-expression, fostering empathy and emotional intelligence in children. Through visual arts, such as painting and sculpture, students can explore and express their emotions safely and constructively, helping them develop compassion and understanding of the emotions of others. In addition to emotional development, art also plays a crucial role in fostering cultural awareness and appreciation. By engaging with different art forms from various cultures and time periods, students can gain a deeper understanding of the world around them and develop a sense of respect for diversity and inclusivity.

Furthermore, the process of creating art often involves collaboration and communication, providing students with invaluable social skills essential for success in their personal and professional lives. Whether working on a group project or giving and receiving feedback on their artistic endeavours, students learn how to effectively communicate and engage with others, laying a strong foundation for healthy relationships and teamwork. Overall, the impact of art on children's development extends far beyond acquiring technical skills. It allows them to cultivate resilience, empathy, cultural understanding, and effective communication - all of which are crucial for navigating the complexities of life. Art education is a holistic approach that enhances children's cognitive abilities and nurtures their emotional and social development. By engaging in artistic activities, children not only sharpen their thinking skills but also cultivate empathy, emotional intelligence, and communication skills, learning to express their feelings, understand diverse perspectives, and collaborate with others, promoting a sense of community and mutual respect. This interconnectedness between cognitive and socio-emotional skills underscores the transformative power of art in shaping well-rounded individuals who are equipped to thrive in a complex and interconnected world. This paper delves into the multifaceted impact of art on various life skills.

## **I. Thinking Skills:**

(critical thinking, creative thinking, problem-solving, decision-making)

Engaging in fine arts nurtures a range of thinking skills in children, fostering their decision-making abilities and critical thinking skills. Art activities such as drawing, painting, or sculpting encourage children to make



informed choices, evaluate options, and consider consequences, refining their decision-making skills. Encouraging children to draw and sketch allows them to visualise their ideas, plan compositions, and think critically about shapes, proportions, and perspectives. Creating collages involves selecting and arranging different materials to form a cohesive composition, which helps children develop problem-solving skills and spatial reasoning. Similarly, sculpting allows children to explore three-dimensional forms, experiment with textures, and think creatively about how to manipulate the material to achieve their desired outcome. By engaging in these art activities, children can develop their thinking skills, such as problem-solving, critical analysis, creativity, and spatial reasoning, in a fun and creative way. Thus, when children participate in these artistic activities, they are encouraged to think critically about the materials, techniques, and concepts they are working with. They are also to analyse and interpret visual information, encouraging them to think critically about composition, colour, form, and other elements of art. By engaging with and reflecting on their own work and the work of others, children develop their critical thinking skills as they evaluate and make judgments about artistic choices and outcomes. This process of experimentation and problem-solving helps them develop their decision-making abilities as they navigate through different artistic challenges and choices.

Through artistic expression, children are also encouraged to think creatively, approach challenges with innovative solutions, and value creativity and originality. It encourages children to think creatively and imaginatively, pushing them to explore new ideas, perspectives, and solutions. This creative thinking process fosters innovation and originality, helping children develop their unique voice and artistic style. Art activities stimulate imaginative thinking and problem-solving skills, promoting inventiveness and the ability to analyse situations and find creative solutions. Children develop heightened awareness and attention to detail by observing their surroundings keenly, enhancing their problem-solving abilities.

Overall, children's involvement in fine arts nurtures inventiveness, critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills, fostering a growth mindset that values creativity and resilience in facing challenges. Art is a powerful tool for developing thinking skills in children, empowering them to thrive in the face of intellectual challenges.

## **II. Personal Skills:**

(self-awareness, self-management skills)

Participation in fine arts significantly contributes to children's develop-

ing essential personal skills. Fine arts can help build children's confidence and self-esteem by allowing them to express themselves creatively and receive positive feedback on their work. When children engage in artistic activities, they can explore their own unique ideas and perspectives, which can help them develop a sense of self-worth and accomplishment. As children practice and improve their artistic skills, they gain a sense of mastery and competence, which can further boost their confidence and self-esteem. Overall, the process of creating art and receiving recognition for their efforts can contribute to a more positive self-image in children. Thus, it helps build confidence and self-esteem as children receive positive feedback and develop their artistic skills, contributing to a more positive self-image.

Fine arts also require discipline and focus, teaching children the value of perseverance, patience, and attention to detail. Through practice and dedication, they learn to master techniques and achieve desired outcomes. Additionally, art stimulates visual learning, allowing children to observe and interpret the world around them and fostering a keen eye for detail, pattern recognition, and spatial awareness that can be applied in academic subjects like mathematics and science. Moreover, art activities enhance fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and dexterity, with practical applications in various aspects of life.

Involvement in art has been linked to improved academic performance and enhancement of cognitive abilities such as memory, attention span, and spatial reasoning. Furthermore, art promotes a holistic approach to learning, encouraging children to make connections between different subjects and gain a deeper understanding of complex concepts. When children participate in art, they are often required to use their memory to recall techniques, concepts, and information learned during the creative process. This can help strengthen their memory skills over time. Additionally, creating art requires focus and attention to detail, which can help improve a child's attention span and concentration.

Furthermore, art activities often involve spatial reasoning, as children must consider the placement of shapes, colours and objects within their artwork. This can help develop spatial awareness and problem-solving skills. Overall, the combination of memory, attention span, and spatial reasoning skills utilised in art can positively impact academic performance and cognitive abilities in children. Engaging in fine arts not only enhances personal skills but also nurtures emotional intelligence and empathy. When children express themselves through art, they learn to understand and communicate their emotions effectively, fostering empathy towards others and encour-

aging them to consider different perspectives. The experience of creating art can be therapeutic, providing a safe outlet for children to process their feelings and experiences. Participating in fine arts encourages creativity and innovative thinking, allowing children to explore their imagination, experiment with ideas, and think outside the box by trying different techniques, materials, and concepts. Exposure to different forms of art, such as traditional and contemporary art from diverse cultures, can broaden children's perspectives and cultivate an appreciation for diversity. It can also help them develop an understanding of different traditions, beliefs, and values, fostering a more inclusive mindset. Overall, the benefits of engaging in fine arts extend beyond developing personal skills, impacting emotional intelligence, creativity, and cultural awareness, enriching children's lives and contributing to their overall well-being.

### **III. Interpersonal Skills:**

(communication skills, empathy, cooperation,  
interpersonal relationship skills)

Fine arts play a crucial role in enhancing children's interpersonal skills by providing a platform for effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal, allowing them to express thoughts and emotions. Children develop language skills beyond words through various art forms, expanding their vocabulary and fostering creative expression. For example, creating visual art allows children to communicate ideas, emotions, and experiences through colours, shapes, and textures. This visual language helps children expand their vocabulary of visual elements and symbols, enhancing their ability to communicate non-verbally. Similarly, engaging in other art forms like music, dance, or drama provides children with opportunities to express themselves through sound, movement, and gesture. These art forms allow children to explore rhythm, tone, and body language as additional means of communication. By participating in these activities, children can develop a deeper understanding of how to convey meaning and emotion through non-verbal cues. Overall, engaging in various art forms helps children expand their language skills beyond words by providing them with alternative modes of expression. This exposure to different forms of communication fosters creative expression, enhances their ability to convey ideas and emotions, and enriches their overall language development.

Exposure to diverse artistic expressions in fine arts promotes cultural awareness and empathy, encouraging children to understand, appreciate, and respect different perspectives and traditions. The safe space provided by art encourages the exploration and expression of emotions, fostering

empathy and emotional intelligence and instilling a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence. Additionally, fine arts activities often involve collaboration and teamwork, teaching children to work together, respect diverse ideas, and contribute to shared goals. By participating in group performances or collaborative art projects, children enhance their interpersonal skills and benefit from enhanced cooperation and teamwork abilities. This prepares them for success in future team-oriented environments. Moreover, exposure to diverse artistic expressions in fine arts encourages children to appreciate and respect different perspectives and traditions at a deeper level, fostering a sense of global citizenship and inclusivity. In essence, the impact of fine arts on children's interpersonal skills extends beyond communication and empathy, encompassing a holistic development that equips them with essential qualities to thrive in diverse and collaborative environments, both now and in the future.

## Conclusion

Art is a powerful catalyst for the development of life skills in children. Through visual arts and performing arts, children acquire a range of skills, including motor skills, language development, decision-making, visual learning, inventiveness, improved academic performance, observation, problem-solving, empathy, and trust in their abilities. However, Arts and crafts in many schools have been marginalised in the current climate of increasing educational demands and curriculum objectives. In many educational systems, there is a strong focus on core academic subjects such as mathematics, science, and language arts. Due to limited time and resources, arts and crafts activities may be seen as less essential and, therefore, receive less attention. Thus, the co-curricular activities are increasingly being neglected in favour of the overbearing emphasis on academics. Therefore, it is essential to give due importance to Arts and Crafts in schools to recognise the transformative power of art and ensure that children have ample opportunities to engage in artistic activities, fostering their holistic growth and equipping them with the skills necessary to thrive in an ever-changing world.

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## **Umang Life Skills Education Programme: Bridging Gaps in Education for Adolescents in Madhya Pradesh**

Jasmeet Kaur\* & Dr. Abhishek Kumar Prajapati\*\*

### **Abstract**

Life skill education is a successful psychosocial intervention strategy for promoting positive social and mental health in adolescents. It is crucial for improving all aspects of adolescent development, including coping mechanisms, emotional intelligence, self-confidence, and problem-solving abilities. The School Education, Department of the Government of Madhya Pradesh launched the Life Skill Education Programme "Umang for students of classes 9th to 12th. In the year 2015, the foundation of the program Umang was laid with 42000 girls of 43 RMSA Girls Hostels of Indore division, many positive changes took place in girls through this program which was run till the year 2017. Umang Life Skill Education program addresses key educational gaps by integrating life skills education into the existing curriculum, emphasizing critical thinking, communication, emotional intelligence, and decision-making skills. The program adopts a learner-centric approach, acknowledging the diverse backgrounds and needs of adolescents in Madhya Pradesh. Through interactive workshops, extracurricular activities, and mentorship programs, Umang Life Skills seeks to empower adolescents with the tools necessary for personal growth and success in various life domains. The impact of Umang Life Skills is measured through a comprehensive evaluation framework that assesses not only academic progress but also the development of crucial life skills and a positive impact on overall well-being. A brief introduction to life skills, life skill education, and types of life skills according to various organisations i.e., UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO, etc. It also discusses strategies for the implementation of the Umang Life Skill Education Program, Mod-

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ules of Umang, and initiatives taken by implementing agencies for the proper for successful running of the program. As education continues to evolve, programs like Umang serve as a beacon, guiding the way toward a more inclusive and comprehensive educational experience for adolescents in Madhya Pradesh.

*Keywords: Life skills, Life skill education, Umang, Curriculum integration, Adolescence*

## **Introduction**

Life skills are a person's psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills, such as their capacity for problem-solving, critical and creative thinking, effective communication, forming and maintaining healthy relationships, empathy, and coping with the day-to-day management of their health and well-being. The schooling stage is a time of intense personal development and transformation for pupils in all spheres of their lives—physical, mental, social, and emotional. The main causes of these changes include development in the areas of biology, cognition, society, and culture. Adolescents can benefit from life skill education by using it as a behavioral intervention method that has been shown to promote positive social and mental health. Enhancing teenage growth in all areas—coping strategies, emotional intelligence, self-assurance, and problem-solving skills—is essential. Realizing each student's full creative potential is a top priority according to the National Education Policy 2020. It is founded on the idea that education must foster the development of not only cognitive skills—The “foundational skills” of literacy and numeracy as well as “higher order” cognitive abilities like critical thinking and problem-solving—as well as social, ethical, and emotional abilities and dispositions—are all important. NEP 2020 states that every aspect of the curriculum and pedagogy would be improved and redesigned. The Government of Madhya Pradesh's School Education Department introduced the “Umang” Life Skills Education Program for students in grades 9 through 12. The program Umang was launched in 2015 with 42,000 girls from 43 RMSA Girls Hostels in the Indore division. During its tenure, which lasted till 2017, the program helped many girls experience good improvements in their lives. They were also studied and the results were so encouraging that it was determined by the School Education Department that the life skills program should be started in all government schools because this program is equally useful not only for girls but also for boys. Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Bhartiya Grameen Mahila Sangh (BGMS) chalked out a strategy for the effective operation of the program in the year 2017.



## **What are Life Skills?**

Skills are the ability to offer excellent performance continuously. Learning something is necessary to be proficient at it. Individuals can transform information and knowledge into specific behaviors and perform effectively in circumstances that call for action. “Brooks (1984) To categorize life skills, an empirical approach was used. The Delphi study was used in collaboration with developmental psychology theorists (Erikson, 1963; Havighurst, 1972 and Kohlberg, 1973; 1976) and classified 305 life skills descriptors into four categories such as (i) interpersonal communication and human relations skills; (ii) problem-solving and decision-making skills; (iii) physical fitness and health maintenance skills; and (iv) identify development/purpose in life skills”. Life skills refer to the capacity to take initiative and accept responsibility for acting in a certain way in a specific scenario to promote healthy living. Hamburg (1990) The education of the abilities required for surviving, relating to people, and prospering in a varied society is known as life skills training. Generic talents include things like decision-making, negotiation, self-control, and communication. Life skills are all the abilities that help someone cope with the challenges of daily living and provide them with the self-assurance to handle any situation amicably. Despite the likelihood that the precise nature and descriptions of life skills may vary across social and cultural situations, WHO investigation resulted in the identification of a core set of abilities for effective living WHO (1993). Accordingly, life skills are defined as the ability to behave flexibly and positively, allowing individuals to manage and steer the challenges and demands of everyday living. Pupils who get life skills instruction are prepared to use in real-world situations the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that are fundamental to human growth. The term “life skills” refers to a group of psychological and social competencies that can help students become more adept at managing their stress, making decisions, and communicating effectively. These competencies can also help people lead happier, healthier lives.

## **Life Skills Education**

In a supportive and successful learning environment, life skills are taught through a program called “life skill education.” All children need life skills education, but adolescents are more so because they are the generation that seems to be most susceptible to behavioral health issues. Education in life skills is a developing field of science. The recent drive to review the foundations of social sciences including psychology, sociology, and social work is what gave rise to life skills education (Nair, Subasree, and Ranjan, 2010).

A valuable program for the next generation's self-understanding and ability to identify their strengths and development needs is life skills education. It attempts to give pupils different methods for making wise decisions that lead to fulfilling lives. Life skills are one of the goals of holistic education. A parallel can be drawn between the educational objectives mentioned in the Delors Commission Report(1993) with life skills. Life skill education has been part of the

CBSE system. However, only in the CCE do students receive grades and are evaluated based on their attitude and the growth of their life skills as part of the evaluation of their co-curricular abilities. The value of education in the classroom It is impossible to overestimate the importance of children's psycho-social and interpersonal skill development. Students who have an education are better able to solve issues, think critically, communicate, build healthy relationships, and lead happy, fulfilling lives.

### **Types of Life Skills**

There is no set or complete list of necessary life skills “International Commission on Education “((Learning: The Treasure within; Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century (Highlights) - UNESCO Digital Library, n.d.)for 21st century appointed by UNESCO in 1993 under the chairmanship of Jacques Delors has focused on four pillars of learning that an individual needed for better life-

- **“Learning to Know:** Cognitive abilities Decisions making/Problem-solving skills Critical thinking skills
- **Learning to Be:** Personal abilities Skills of increasing internal locus of control Skills for managing feelings and Skills for managing stress
- **Learning to Do:** It calls for new types of skills, more behavioral than intellectual. The material and the technology are becoming secondary to human qualities and interpersonal relationships.
- **Learning to Live Together:** Interpersonal skills Interpersonal communication skills Negotiation/ Refusal Skills Empathy Cooperation and teamwork Advocacy skills”. (Learning: The Treasure within; Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century (Highlights) - UNESCO Digital Library, n.d.)

## Life Skills According to UNICEF

**UNICEF (1997)** Comprehensive-Life Skills-Framework recognizes several levels of life skills:

- Basic psychological and social skills (strongly shaped by cultural and social values);
- Situation-specific skills (e.g., negotiation, assertiveness, conflict resolution);
- Applied Life Skills (e.g., challenging gender roles or refusing drugs).

## WHO Life Skills

In 1997, the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva released a piece titled “Life Skills Education for Children and Adolescents in Schools.” - Section I: Overview of Life Skills for Psychosocial Competence and Section II: Recommendations the Mental Health Program consists of the creation and implementation of a life skills program. Ten different areas of fundamental (generic) life skills were addressed in Part 1. They are adapted from “School-Based Life Skills Education for Children and Adolescents”).”-Programme on Mental Health, World Health Organization, Geneva, 1997) as follows –

**Figure 1: Life Skills by WHO**



(Source: <https://nutspace.in/10-core-life-skills/>)

1. **Self-awareness:** WHO defines it, “Self-awareness refers to our understanding of ourselves, our personalities, our strengths and weaknesses,

our desires and dislikes”.

2. **Empathy:** This is the capacity to empathize with others who are experiencing hardship and support them emotionally.
3. **Effective communication:** Effective communication is the capacity of effective verbal and nonverbal communication with others to establish and maintain effective social relationships with others.
4. **Interpersonal Relationships:** It's also known as survival or people skills. It is a vital life skill as well as the most important dimension of human intelligence. It encourages initiating and maintaining positive relationships with other persons and avoiding destructive relations with minimum disturbance.
5. **Creative Thinking:** It is the capacity to generate fresh, creative ideas, turn them into actions with original thought, and enable a person to respond adaptably and creatively to a variety of life's issues by considering and assessing potential solutions.
6. **Critical Thinking:** Self-directed and self-disciplined thinking grounded in objectivity and logical reasoning is known as critical thinking. It enhances one's capacity for rational, objective thought as well as the ability to analyze data and experiences.
7. **Decision Making:** It assists a person in selecting the greatest option from a range of options and making the right selections at the appropriate times. This is the capacity to weigh the benefits and drawbacks of several possibilities and, after considering options and their implications, to persuasively take ownership of one's decisions.
8. **Problem-solving:** When a goal is not immediately apparent, problem-solving is the process of attempting to identify a suitable means of achieving it. It fosters the capacity to overcome obstacles and accomplish goals without resorting to force, aggression, rage, or resistance.
9. **Coping with Emotion:** Emotional regulation helps an individual understand how others and themselves are feeling. A person can discover safe, constructive, and healthy ways to express their emotions as a result. It aids in recognizing how emotions influence behavior, teaching proper emotional reactions, and controlling strong emotions like grief and rage.
10. **Coping with Stress:** This skill enables an individual to recognize the

source of stress, the effect of stress, and techniques to control stress and how to overcome it.

### **UMANG Life Skills Education Programme of Madhya Pradesh**

The percentage of adolescents in India's population is 20.6%. The period of life between childhood and adulthood, known as adolescence, lasts from the ages of 10 to 19. It is a special time in human development and a crucial moment to establish the groundwork for long-term health. Teenagers grow quickly in all areas—physical, cognitive, and psychological. This has an impact on their emotions, thoughts, decision-making, and interactions with the outside environment. Although adolescents are generally seen as a healthy stage of life, there is a considerable rate of disease, injury, and mortality during this time. A large portion of this is treatable or avoidable. In this stage of development, teenagers create behavioural patterns - such as those concerning food, exercise, drug use, and sexual behaviour - that either safeguard their health and the health of others around them or jeopardize their health in the long run. Adolescents require a variety of informational resources to grow and develop in good health, including comprehensive and age-appropriate sexuality education, chances to learn life skills, and surroundings that are safe, supportive, egalitarian, and appropriate. Additionally, they require chances to actively engage in the planning and execution of interventions aimed at preserving and enhancing their health. To address the unique needs and rights of teenagers, it is imperative to expand these possibilities.

The Government of Madhya Pradesh's School Education Department launched the Life Skills Education Program to meet this WHO goal "Umang"(Life Skills Education Program | Umang | Jeevan Tarang, n.d.) for students of classes 9th to 12th. The program Umang was launched in 2015 with 42,000 girls from 43 RMSA Girls Hostels in the Indore division. During its tenure, which lasted till 2017, the program helped many girls experience good improvements in their lives. They were also investigated, and the results were so positive that the School Education Department decided that a life skills program ought to be implemented in all government schools since it benefits both boys and girls equally. RMSA, BGMS(n.d.) chalked out a strategy for effective operation of the program and in the year 2017, Jeevan Kaushal program was started in the schools of block headquarters of every district. Students from classes 9 through 12 participate in Saturday sessions, which are organized according to the basic module that is created for class 9 by teachers with specialized training. It was introduced in 1886 schools during the first phase and subsequently in 9228

schools. The life skill education module for the 12th grade is likewise developed in the same order. The students began discussing their issues and developing life skills, which led to a decrease in their hesitancy and a sense of need for counselling. This led to the establishment of UMANG Helpline 14425. The ‘Umang’ life skill education program aids in giving teenage ladies direction. It has been in use, and its benefits to them are always being demonstrated.

## OBJECTIVES

In order to help adolescent students in Madhya Pradesh’s Government State Board High and Higher Secondary Schools achieve their goals and make informed decisions for their health and well-being, as well as to address harmful social practices like child marriage, gender inequality, and dowries, it is important to provide them with life skills. to increase instructors’ ability and proficiency in addressing adolescent needs by offering LSE to teenagers enrolled in the schools.

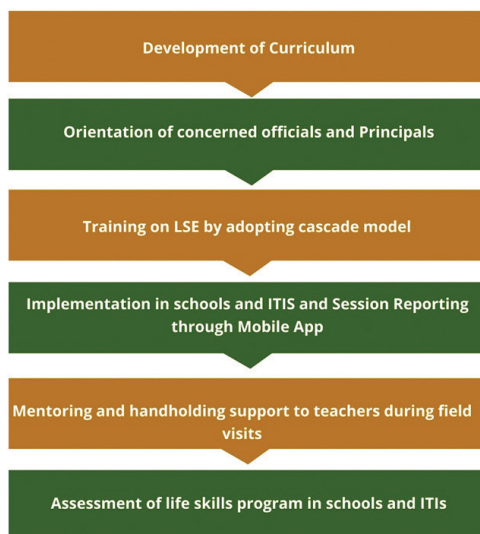
## Outreach

**52 Districts, 9228 Schools, 12599 trained Teachers and 1,800,000+ Students**

Operational roadmap for the rollout of LSE in MP

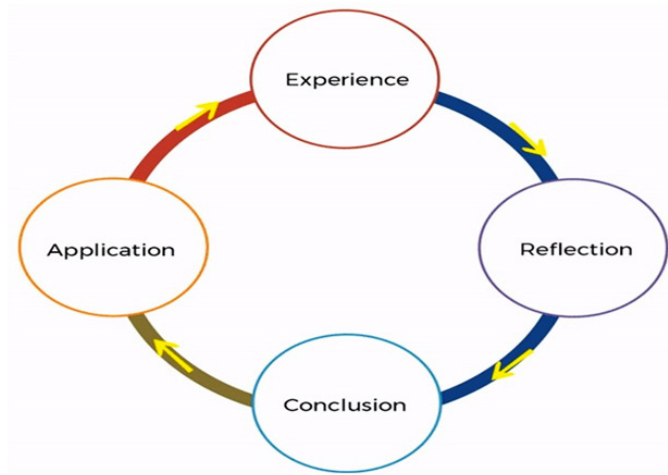
## STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

**Figure 2: Strategy for implementation**



(Source: <https://www.lifeskillsumang.in/>)

**Figure 3: Approach for Umang**



(Source:<https://www.lifeskillsumang.in/>)

### **Implementation of the UMANG Program**

- District-level training of skilled trainers based on ‘UMANG’ guide
- Orientation of principals
- Training of block-level skilled trainers at the district level
- Training of nodal teachers at the block level
- Orientation of school teachers by nodal teacher
- Weekly sessions conduct in schools (class-wise)

### **Approach For Implementation**

The 21st-century skills are essentially the outcome of experiential learning, i.e. they are imbibed through observing, understanding, practicing and experiencing. Life Skills Education Sessions are based on the principles of adult learning and experiential learning.

### **UMANG Life Skills Education Modules**

Umang Life Skill Education modules are prepared for the successful implementation of the program. There are four Life Skill Education modules for students of classes 9th to 12th in a series. These are developed and published by the Department of School Education Government of Madhya Pradesh in collaboration with BGMS and UNFPA. Through these modules, teachers along with the school curriculum impart life skills among students during school hours. The process of developing Behavioural competencies,



positive outlooks, and skills among students is undergoing. After successfully Implementing the Umang Programme throughout the State results are quite encouraging. After proper implementation of Umang modules students have developed decision-making abilities and also Teacher-Student relationship has also improved. Students have benefitted from this program and they can now confidently face challenges in their lives and make a balance with them. They have developed a positive outlook towards life and feel satisfied and motivated. Umang modules which are prepared for teachers after testing their utility the need for the development of such handouts for students is also been felt. This will help students to look for references when they are required to do so for debate, or discussion to develop deep understanding and analysis they need in self-study material.

### **Importance of Life Skills for Adolescents**

The capacity to adjust to any situation and thrive in the rebirth and prosperity of society is what makes life skills crucial for students. These days, one of the biggest issues that need immediate attention and answers is the absence of life skills in the younger generation. This is a result of the output of schooling lacking in life skills. As a result of lacking these essential abilities, many people struggle in both their personal and professional life. Every day, students must make decisions. Students that possess decision-making abilities learn how to make well-informed decisions when faced with multiple options. After you've considered all the information at your disposal and spoken with the parties involved in a particular circumstance, decisions can be taken. In addition, life skills empower kids to take charge of their own education rather than placing blame elsewhere and enable them to act when their parents or teachers are unavailable. As a result, cultivating the capacity to adapt to life's uncertainties has become essential to all development plans and strategies, including India's National Education Policy 2020.

### **Impact of UMANG Life Skills Education Programme**

Sutra Consulting, a research group, has been tasked by UNFPA with conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the UMANG LSE program's potential long-term impacts. After that, in November 2020, this study project was initiated. What changes did they encounter in their personal lives, families, and society after leaving the hostel, and how did those life skills allow them to improve their lives going forward? Studies are conducted on these points. BGMS is working as a coordinating organization this research work. For this Hostels selected by "BGMS contacted SUTRA

shortly after, and using the information that was available about female students, they created basic and identifying data in order to get in touch with them, speak with them one-on-one, and conduct a survey. BGMS provided the Sutra team with the contact information of all 83 of the girls who were available for the survey. Sutra chose the survey crew, and BGMS arranged for their orientation following the conclusion of the program for life skills education. Both organizations created a survey form, which was ultimately completed at the Tirla Hostel in Dhar. After that, Sutra finishes the survey process.

### **Success Stories of UMANG Life Skills Education Programme**

Umang Programme is becoming a medium for positive change in the lives of teenagers. Its encouraging effects are being reflected in various aspects of his life, which he continues to share.

**Here are some of these inspiring stories, based on their personal experiences.**

#### **Figure 4: Umang success story 1**

##### **Got the courage to dream through life skills education**

Javad's Nidhi (name changed) knows very well how painful and sad it is to lose the influence of one's parents in one's teenage years. 16-year-old Nidhi, studying in class 12th, was burdened with the entire household work. When she was 14 years old, her father died and a year later, Nidhi's mother also died. In such a situation where it becomes very difficult to control oneself. Nidhi says, "I started feeling stressed as all the responsibilities of the family fell on me. It felt as if the whole world was of no use to me. At such a time, no one came forward to help me, so I felt very sad." Would have felt sad."

This stress badly affected Nidhi's nature and health and she was living a depressed life. Then she got the opportunity to participate in the sessions of life skills education "Umang". This benefited him a lot and also helped him come out of the cycle of despair. She says, "Through life skills education, I got information about mental stress management and in this session, I got to limits use along with many activities. Then I got the courage to openly discuss and share my problems with teachers and friends. All this reduced my stress to a great extent." In this way, Nidhi acquired the skill to overcome stress through life skills education and her fear, stress and despair went away and there was a big change in her outlook. She says, "In that frustrating life, I had forgotten to dream about myself and my future. I was just living life some how and did not even talk to anyone." But life skills education made her strong to live life once again. Now she resembles everyone with great enthusiasm and excitement and has started talking openly. She is thinking of doing a lot in life and has started working hard for it.

*(Source: <https://www.lifeskillsumang.in/>)*

## Figure 5: Umang success story 2

### Shikha's steps towards self-reliance

This is the story of Shikha Sahu, a class 11 science student at Government Higher Secondary School, Gopalganj. There was neither any direction nor any purpose in Shikha's life. Going to school and studying was only because it was considered necessary for everyone. She used to spend her time unnecessarily, chatting here and there or doing useless work, sometimes she would sit in front of the TV for hours and watch serials. Everyone was troubled by this habit of his, but what could anyone do when he himself had absolutely no interest in anything. This is the condition of those who live an aimless life. When he got the opportunity to attend life skills education class in school, when he was given the task of analyzing his actions during the 'self-awareness' and critical thinking session, he took it seriously. In evaluating himself. She started seeing many shortcomings in himself. She felt that she would not gain anything from the education she was receiving without any purpose and the life she was living. After understanding, there was a big change in him. She started making maximum use of her time, the desire to achieve something awakened in her. He started getting interested in studies and along with this he started watching TV. And kept distance from other time-wasting means. Shikha says that now my aim in life is to pass with good marks and make a career so that I can stand on my own feet and become self-reliant.

### A healthy mind in a healthy body

Ankita Chakraborty, a class 11th student, was going through a very difficult time. She was unable to control herself due to the mental and physical changes of adolescence. Due to his unhealthy mind, his studies in this important class were getting affected day by day. If he got less marks, his mood would get worse. All this broke him from within.

'Umang' life skills classes became a ray of knowledge and hope for Ankita. In these sessions, when the problems of this age and their solutions were discussed, it seemed as if he got answers to all his questions. He also learned how to keep himself healthy, the importance of nutritious food, etc. He started adopting all these things in life.

She started taking a balanced diet in which she took care of all the minerals, proteins, fats and carbohydrates etc. He now understood that good food has good effects on the body, the result was also good. When Ankita's health improved, she started taking interest in studies also. Now she started being happy. Due to this, her behavior with all her classmates in the class also improved and she started behaving openly and confidently. Ankita also suggested all her friends to bring nutritious food in tiffin. Gradually his health also improved. Everyone overcame other disorders like anemia and weakness. He improved his life with regular exercise and interest in other activities.

(Source: <https://www.lifeskillsumang.in/>)

## Figure 6: Words from the field

### Two words... from the field...

#### From the pen of teachers...

Life Skills: These may only sound like some good words but understanding them and following them in Gives experience. I learned and experienced this in the Life Skills Training and Principal Orientation Programme.

How we can bring effective changes in our daily life with some positive thinking. Every student and teacher should have this skill. I have got a new perspective on life from this training. Heartfelt thanks to Jeevan Tarang team for this.

#### From the pens of students...

My name is Chetna Patel and I am a 10th class student of Dhar Model School. Due to Covid-19, our schools were closed which not only affected our studies but also life skills education sessions were not taking place. I thought that this year we would not be able to take advantage of the life skills education program, but then we started getting links of life skills through WhatsApp. It was a very fun experience. Every Saturday we get a link through which we watch the story of Madhav-Muskaan. Then we get to learn interesting information with handouts with links and it is very interesting to answer the questions by filling the feedback form. Life skills education is very useful for our life. Through this, we not only understood about our personality development but also understood how to face the problems that come in life.

(Source: <https://www.lifeskillsumang.in/>)

## CONCLUSION

A relevant and proper implementation of life skill education is a need of an hour, for today's society. Imparting life skills education to the students, can be helpful as it specifically addresses the needs of children, helps in motivating, providing practical, cognitive, emotional, social and self-management skills for life adjustments. Life skill education program 'Umang' helps in providing direction to adolescents. It has been active and its usefulness is continuously being proved for them. Information related to the importance of life skills in adolescence and their benefits. It is very important to reach as many people as possible. Life Skills are relevant and even more necessary for adolescents. Information about the positive impact of 'Umang' program on teenagers through various mediums or in the form of feedback, it is clear that the students understand the importance and usefulness of life skills and imbibe it in life Have done and also benefited.

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## Impact of Life Skills Training Among Rural and Urban Adolescents

Sasikala Vankayala\* and Prof. K. Anuradha\*\*

### Abstract

In the dynamic landscape of adolescent development, the acquisition of life skills plays a pivotal role in shaping cognitive and emotional competencies. By equipping adolescents with essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes, life skills training empowers them to thrive academically, socially, emotionally, and personally, ultimately setting the foundation for a fulfilling and successful life. The present study was conducted to identify the influence of life skills training on the life skills scores of rural and urban adolescents. A sample of 360 students (180 Boys and 180 Girls) studying 7th, 8th and 9th class in rural and urban areas of Tirupati town were selected by using a systematic stratified random sampling technique. Life Skills Self-Rating Scale (Anuradha, 2005), was used to measure life skills scores of students. The survey method was used to collect the data from schools run by two types of managements that is government and private organizations. The data related to life skills was assessed and life skills training was provided to students who were identified with poor skills for six months period through different teaching methods. Again, post-test of life skills scores was conducted. Findings revealed that providing life skills education helped adolescents to get significant improvement in most of the skills. The results showed that providing life skills training to high school students will be useful to promote their personal skills to face day today challenges.

*Keywords: Adolescents, life skills, life skills training.*

### Introduction

According to (Stehlik, 2018), adolescence can be defined biologically, as the physical transition marked by the onset of puberty and the termination of physical growth; cognitively, as changes in the ability to think abstractly and multi-dimensionally; or socially, as a period of preparation for adult

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roles. Adolescence, often regarded as the bridge between childhood and adulthood, is a critical juncture in human development. Adolescence stage can be sub - divided into early, middle and late adolescence (McNeely, 2009). Early and middle adolescents in a high school setting have a different academic and social situation as compared to college students. It is a critical period of development marked by significant physical, emotional, and cognitive changes. As adolescents navigate this transitional phase, acquiring life skills becomes essential for their overall well-being and successful integration into adulthood.

Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable humans to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of life. (WHO, 2020). Life skills encompass a diverse range of abilities that empower individuals to effectively manage the challenges of daily life. From communication and critical thinking to emotional intelligence and problem-solving, these skills serve as the building blocks for personal development and societal engagement. The ten core life skills identified by world bodies such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and WHO are Self-awareness, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Decision making, Problem solving, Effective communication, Interpersonal relationships, Empathy, Coping with Emotions and Coping with Stress. These ten core life skills encompass a range of abilities that are crucial for personal development, success in various aspects of life, and overall well-being.

Life skills training refers to the acquisition of skills that enable individuals to effectively navigate the challenges and responsibilities of daily life. These skills typically encompass the following domains including communication, problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, empathy, coping with stress, and managing emotions, among others. Life skills training aims to equip individuals with the competencies needed to manage personal and social challenges, make informed decisions, and achieve greater overall well-being. Life skills training programs are vital for high school students as they provide the necessary tools and knowledge to succeed academically, personally, and professionally, while also promoting overall well-being and responsible citizenship.

With this background the present study was conducted with the following objectives.

### **Objectives**

- To ascertain the level of life skills among sample students



- To determine gender-based differences in life skills scores among the sample
- To examine variations in life skills scores among the sample based on their type of school
- To identify sample students with poor life skills and provide life skills training
- To determine the impact of life skills training on life skills of sample students

## **METHOD**

The sample of the study included students who were studying in 7th, 8th and 9th grades in both government and private schools in Tirupati town. A systematic stratified random sampling technique was used to obtain the sample. Systematic stratified random sampling involves dividing the population into homogeneous subgroups, selecting samples from each subgroup using a systematic procedure, and combining them to ensure a representative sample with proportional representation from all categories. The schools in both rural and urban areas of Tirupati were listed and two schools were randomly selected from each area. From each type of school, given equal importance to gender and locale of study, 30 students studying 7th, 8th and 9th were selected. Thus 180 students from rural and 180 students from urban area were selected, making up a total sample size of 360 students (180 boys and 180 girls).

The following are the tools of study

### **Tools**

- General Information Schedule
- Life skills Self-rating Scale (Anuradha, 2005)

The General Information Schedule includes personal and demographic information about students, and their parents.

The author reported that the Life Skills Self-Rating Scale (LSSR) was developed with 100 items. After item analysis, the scale was refined to include 65 statements, each to be answered on a three-point rating scale. The minimum possible score is 0, and the maximum score is 130, with higher scores indicating better life skills.

The data was collected in three phases.

In the first phase a pre -test was conducted. For this the researcher personally visited the schools and obtained permission from the heads of each institution to interview the students. The sample were taken to a separate room and administrated the general information schedule after establishing good rapport. Life skills Self-rating Scale was also administrated individually. The subject was made to be seated comfortably and instructed to go through the scale and answer it genuinely, with no time limit. It took approximately 30 minutes for a student to complete the scale.

In the next phase of the study, it was planned to provide life skills training to the students. The assessment results were analyzed using the prescribed scoring procedures. It was determined that 7th,8th, and 9th grade students, aged 12, 13 and 14 respectively, comprised 43 boys and 47 girls in both government and private schools located in rural and urban areas, exhibited poor life skills compared to their peers. Permission was obtained from school authorities by the researcher to provide life skills training using diverse training methods such as brainstorming, classroom discussions, demonstrations, role-plays, group activities, power point presentations, video visuals, educational games and simulations, analysis of situations and case studies, storytelling, debates, miming, poetry and recitals, question and answer methods empathy mapping and debriefings. The entire program covered a period of six months, including holidays, which is 72 sessions with each session lasting 1 hour each in government school during morning hours, and an equivalent number of sessions during the afternoon in private school in rural area. Subsequently, an equivalent number of morning and afternoon sessions were conducted the next day in urban area, in both government and private schools, over a three-month period, with planned breaks during school hours. The training includes 10 weeks dedicated to 10 skills that were planned to be conducted 6 days per week, with an additional 2 weeks allocated for integration, review, and assessments, spanning a total of 3 months. The specific life skills training included self-awareness, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, problem-solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, empathy, stress coping, and emotional management. Additionally, traditional practices such as pranayama like Bhramari, asanas such as Vajrasana and Surya Namaskaras, and the recitation of slokas and chanting om mantra were integrated to promote holistic well-being. The content and methodology were meticulously crafted to foster comprehensive cognitive, emotional, and physical development among the sample adolescents ensuring a meaningful and effective learning experience.

After intervention, a post-test was conducted for 90 students, comprising 7th, 8th, and 9th-grade students aged 12, 13, and 14 respectively, with 43 boys and 47 girls from both government and private schools located in rural and urban areas, who were provided with life skills training.

**Results**

The data were pooled, aggregated and subjected to appropriate statistical analysis. The following tables present a discussion of the results.

**Table 1:** Distribution of Sample Adolescents according to Gender and Type of School

Demographic Variables	Variable	Number	Percent
Gender	Boys	180	50.0
	Girls	180	50.0
	Total	360	100.0
Type of School	Government	180	50.0
	Private	180	50.0
	Total	360	100.0

From table 1, it is clear that the sample were chosen by giving an equal representation of boys and girls, accounting for 50 percent of the total sample. Thus, 180 boys and 180 girls constituted the sample. This balanced gender distribution ensures that the study can provide insights about presence of life skills among male and female adolescents, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of potential gender-specific effects.

With regard to distribution of sample according to type of school, the sample was equally divided between government and private schools, with 180 adolescents in each category, accounting for 50 percent of the total sample. This purposive distribution allows for a comparative analysis of life skills between adolescents in government schools and private schools.

**Table 2:** Frequency Distribution of Life Skills Scores among Adolescents

Life skills scores	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
35 – 50	90	25	25
51 – 65	91	25.3	50.3
66 – 80	75	20.8	71.1
81 – 95	77	21.4	92.5
96 -110	23	6.4	98.9
> 110	4	1.1	100.0
<b>Total</b>	360	100.0	100.0

Mean	68.59	Std. Deviation	18.04
Median	65.00	Skewness	0.30
Mode	49	Kurtosis	-0.73
Range	84		
Minimum	35	Maximum	119

From table 2, a perusal of descriptive statistics showed that the mean life skills score of sample adolescent was 68.59 with standard deviation 18.04. The minimum score was 35 and maximum 119 with a range of 84.

In terms of life skills scores, the analysis revealed that among the sample adolescent’s 20.8 percent of sample adolescents fell within the mean range of 66-80 with a significant proportion having scores below the mean, comprising 25.3 percent in 51-65 range and 25 percent in 35-50 range. Conversely, approximately 29 percent had life skills score above the mean. These findings indicate that nearly half of the sample adolescents have life skills scores below the mean (68.59/18.04+/-18.04).

**Table 3:** Mean Life Skills Scores of Adolescents

Gender	N	Mean ± S. D	Std. Error	t -value (p-value)	Sig.
Boys	180	69.52 ± 19.478	1.452	0.979@ (0.328)	Not significant
Girls	180	67.66 ± 16.471	1.228		
<b>Total</b>	360	68.59 ± 18.036			

From table 3, shows that there was no significant gender difference in the life skills scores of sample students. The t-value and p-value indicate that any observed differences in mean scores between boys and girls may be due to random variation and do not represent a true gender-based disparity in life skills. These results indicate in this study, it does not appear to be an important factor influencing the development of adolescent life skills. Studies reported that no significant difference between boys and girls in life skills (Anuradha ,2014; Arathi Chakra, 2016).

**Table 4:** Mean Life Skills Scores of Adolescents according to Type of School

Type of School	N	Mean ± S. D	Std. Error	t -value (p-value)	Sig.
Government	180	64.21 ± 15.868	1.183	4.751** (0.000)	**Significant at 0.01
Private	180	72.98 ± 19.025	1.418		
Total	360	68.59 ± 18.036			

From table 4, revealed that there was a significant difference in life skills scores of students studying in government and private school the t-value was 4.751 which was highly significant. This data suggests that type of school plays a role in shaping adolescent life skills development. Comparatively students studying in private schools scored more than those in government schools. The higher average score in private schools can be attributed to various factors such as different teaching methods, resources or may be due to socio-economic backgrounds.

As mentioned in methodology an intervention programme on life skills was given to those who fell in the range of 35-50 scores. Table 5 shows the pre and post-test life skills scores of samples (n=90) who had poor life skills according to gender.

**Table 5:** Pre and Post – Test Life Skills Scores among Adolescents according to Gender

Life skills	Boys (n=43)			Girls (n=47)		
	Pre	Post	t-value	Pre	Post	t-value
Decision making	5.72 ± 2.15	7.79± 1.95	5.974 **p<0.001	5.04± 1.69	7.49 ± 1.71	8.176 **p<0.001

Critical thinking	4.35± 1.15	8.19± 1.53	14.652 **P<0.001	4.60 1.19 ±	8.40 ± 1.30	15.226 **P<0.001
Effective communication	4.37± 1.22	8.37± 1.68	14.576 **P<0.001	4.85 1.40 ±	8.79 ± 1.98	14.523 **P<0.001
Self-awareness	4.33± 1.04	7.23± 1.62	11.908 **P<0.001	4.74 1.09 ±	7.64 ± 1.58	12.687 **P<0.001
Coping with emotions	4.40± 1.18	7.51± 1.52	11.256 **P<0.001	4.72 1.08 ±	7.70 ± 1.49	10.916 **P<0.001
Problem solving	4.33± 1.04	7.95± 1.50	17.917 **P<0.001	4.23 1.20 ±	7.66 ±1.80	12.612 **P<0.001
Creative thinking	4.72± 1.30	8.26± 1.88	11.301 **P<0.001	4.47 ±1.30	8.49 ± 2.01	12.522 **P<0.001
Interpersonal relationship	4.35± 1.31	7.35± 1.54	12.047 **P<0.001	4.74 1.21 ±	7.77± 1.78	9.366 **P<0.001
Empathy	4.30± 1.21	7.00 ± 1.69	10.878 **P<0.001	4.51 1.25 ±	6.91± 1.57	11.106 **P<0.001
Coping with stress	4.81± 1.38	7.86 ± 2.05	8.811 **P<0.001	4.60 1.35 ±	7.64± 1.45	13.140 **P<0.001
<b>Total</b>	45.67± 3.97	77.51± 11.11	18.935 **P<0.001	46.51± 3.60	78.49 ± 11.60	17.850 **P<0.001

From table 5, a comparison of pre- and post- test life skills scores among adolescents showed that total life skills scores for both genders increased significantly from pre- to post-test (t-value = 18.935 for boys and 17.850 for girls,  $p < 0.001$ ), it reveals the effectiveness of the intervention in enhancing the comprehensive development of life skills among adolescents. Puspakumara, and Ghale, (2013). also reported that life skills training was effective in preventing a wide range of problems and to promote self-confidence and self-esteem among the adolescents.

**Table 6 :** Pre and Post – Test Life Skills Scores of Samples Studying in Government and Private Schools

Life Skills	Life Skills Scores					
	Government (n=52)			Private (n=38)		
	Pre	Post	t-value	Pre	Post	t-value
Decision Making	6.04 2.20	+ 7.65 ± 1.95	5.344 **P<0.001	4.45 +0.95	7.61 ± 1.65	10.852 **P<0.001
Critical Thinking	4.42 1.26	+ 8.40 ± 1.51	15.678 **P<0.001	4.55 ± 1.06	8.16 ± 1.26	14.656 **P<0.001

Effective Communication	4.69 1.53	+ 8.73 + 1.76	15.335 **P<0.001	4.53 + 1.01	8.39 + 1.95	13.809 **P<0.001
Self-awareness	4.56 1.21	+ 7.25 + 1.51	13.155 **P<0.001	4.53 + .89	7.71 + 1.71	11.724 **P<0.001
Coping with emotions	4.27 1.07	+ 7.62 + 1.55	13.896 **P<0.001	4.97 + 1.10	7.61 + 1.44	8.498 **P<0.001
Problem solving	4.21 1.23	+ 7.67 + 1.76	15.124 **P<0.001	4.37 + .97	7.97 + 1.52	13.864 **P<0.001
Creative Thinking	4.38 1.32	+ 8.33 + 2.06	13.192 **P<0.001	4.87 + 1.23	8.45 + 1.80	10.439 **P<0.001
Interpersonal Relationship	4.46 1.34	+ 7.69 + 1.59	11.671 **P<0.001	4.68 + 1.16	7.39 + 1.79	8.990 **P<0.001
Empathy	4.27 1.25	+ 6.88 + 1.66	11.060 **P<0.001	4.61 + 1.17	7.05 + 1.58	11.348 **P<0.001
Coping with Stress	4.63 1.33	+ 7.63 + 1.67	11.035 **P<0.001	4.79 + 1.42	7.89 + 1.89	10.000 **P<0.001
<b>Total</b>	45.94 4.24	+ 77.87 + 11.73	19.019 **P<0.001	46.34 + 3.10	78.24 + 10.88	17.684 **P<0.001

From table 6, presents a comparison of pre- and post-test life skills scores of sample adolescents studying in government and private school, revealing the differential impacts of life skills training in the two educational settings. Total life skills scores for students studying in both government and private schools increased significantly from pre- to post-test (t-value = 19.019 for government school and 17.684 for private school). It reveals comprehensive impact of life skills training on overall development of adolescents.

## CONCLUSIONS

- From the above discussion following conclusions can be drawn. Nearly half of the sample adolescents had life skills scores below the average range. It emphasizes the importance of addressing and improving life skills at this critical developmental stage.
- A significant difference in life skills scores between students studying in government and private schools, indicated that the educational environment plays a key role in shaping the life skills of adolescents. However, no gender difference was found.
- The intervention through life skills training has demonstrated its efficacy in developing overall life skills among adolescents. Both

genders and students from government and private schools demonstrated significant increases in life skills scores, emphasizing the positive impact of life skills training.

## Implications

- These results are important for teachers, parents and policy makers and those who work directly with students.
- The results showed that the type of school affects life skills, which highlights the need to improve skills among students studying in government schools. Policy makers can find ways to decrease this gap and ensure that all students have equal access to life skills development by including it in the curriculum.
- As life skills training is found to have a positive impact including it in school curriculum helps the high school students to develop life skills, to face day to day challenges.

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## Impact of Life Skills Awareness and Yoga Practice on Physical and Mental Well-Being of Postgraduate Students: A Comparative Study

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### Abstract

This study investigates the impact of life skills awareness and yoga practice on the physical health and mental well-being of postgraduate students. Using a comparative approach, the research examines differences between yoga practitioners and non-practitioners among postgraduate students at Banaras Hindu University (BHU). A sample of 200 students (100 yoga practitioners and 100 non-practitioners) participated in the study. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and self-report scales assessing life skills awareness, physical health, and mental well-being. Thematic analysis was used for qualitative data, while descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to quantitative data. Results revealed significant differences between the two groups. Yoga practitioners demonstrated higher levels of life skills awareness, particularly in areas of self-awareness, stress management, and adaptability. They also reported better physical health outcomes, including improved flexibility and posture, and reduced muscular tension. In terms of mental well-being, yoga practitioners exhibited lower stress levels, better focus, and higher emotional resilience compared to non-practitioners.

The study found a positive correlation between regular yoga practice, enhanced life skills awareness, and improved physical and mental well-being. Yoga practitioners also reported better integration of life skills into their daily routines and more effective management of academic-life balance.

These findings suggest that incorporating yoga practice and life skills education into postgraduate curricula could potentially enhance students' overall well-being. The study contributes to the growing body of

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research on holistic approaches to student welfare in higher education and provides a foundation for further investigation into the long-term benefits of yoga and life skills awareness for postgraduate students.

*Keywords: Comparative study, Life Skills education, Postgraduate students, Well-being, Yoga*

## **Introduction**

The landscape of postgraduate education has evolved significantly in recent years, presenting students with unique challenges that can impact their overall well-being (Evans et al., 2018). The demanding nature of advanced academic pursuits, coupled with personal and professional pressures, has led to increased stress levels and mental health concerns among postgraduate students (Mackie & Bates, 2019). In this context, exploring holistic approaches to enhance student well-being has become crucial. Yoga, an ancient practice combining physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation, has gained recognition for its potential benefits on both physical and mental health (Khalsa et al., 2016). Studies have shown that regular yoga practice can lead to reduced stress, improved physical fitness, and enhanced cognitive function (Ross & Thomas, 2010). Similarly, life skills education has emerged as a vital component in preparing students for the complexities of modern life, equipping them with tools for effective communication, decision-making, and emotional regulation (Prajapati et al., 2017). This study aims to investigate the relationship between yoga practice, life skills awareness, and their collective impact on the physical health and mental well-being of postgraduate students. By comparing yoga practitioners with non-practitioners, we seek to understand the potential benefits of integrating these practices into postgraduate education. The relevance of this research is underscored by the growing concern over student mental health in higher education. Recent studies have reported increasing rates of stress, anxiety, and depression among postgraduate students (Evans et al., 2018). As institutions grapple with how best to support student well-being, evidence-based interventions are crucial.

Moreover, the emphasis on life skills in this study aligns with the World Health Organization's advocacy for life skills-based education as a means to promote psychosocial competence and well-being (WHO, 2020). By examining how yoga practice might enhance life skills awareness, this research contributes to the broader discourse on holistic approaches to education and student development. Through this comparative study, we aim to provide insights that can inform policy and practice in postgraduate ed-

ucation, potentially leading to more comprehensive approaches to student well-being. By investigating the synergies between yoga practice and life skills awareness, we hope to contribute to the development of strategies that nurture not only academic excellence but also the overall health and resilience of postgraduate students.

With a specific focus on a cohort of 100 yoga practitioners and 100 non-yoga practitioners from Banaras Hindu University (BHU), this research seeks to illuminate the nuanced interplay between these factors, offering insights that contribute to the broader understanding of the holistic development of postgraduate students.

Postgraduate education, characterized by its intensity, research commitments, and personal growth challenges, represents a pivotal phase in the academic journey. The environment can be both intellectually rewarding and psychologically demanding, necessitating a keen exploration of factors that contribute to the overall well-being of postgraduate students. Amidst the various strategies employed to enhance well-being, two key components—life skills awareness and yoga practice—emerge as potentially influential in fostering a balanced and resilient academic experience.

The primary aim of this research is to unravel the intricate connections between life skills awareness, yoga practice, and the well-being of postgraduate students. By conducting a comparative study between yoga practitioners and non-yoga practitioners, we intend to discern the specific impacts of engaging in yoga practices within the unique context of postgraduate education. This exploration extends beyond the mere quantification of well-being, seeking a qualitative understanding of the lived experiences of students at BHU.

### **Yoga and Life Skills**

Yoga practice can significantly contribute to the development and enhancement of various life skills. Here's how each of the ten core life skills is related to yoga practice:

1. **Self-awareness:** - **Yoga Connection:** Through mindful movement, breath awareness, and meditation, yoga encourages self-reflection and fosters a deep connection with one's thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations.
2. **Self-regulation:** - **Yoga Connection:** Yoga involves techniques such as controlled breathing (pranayama) and meditation that promote emotional regulation and stress management, helping individuals

maintain balance and composure.

3. Communication: - Yoga Connection: Practicing yoga enhances body awareness and non-verbal communication. Moreover, yoga classes often emphasize positive and supportive verbal communication between instructors and participants.
4. Interpersonal relationships: - Yoga Connection: Yoga classes create a community environment, fostering connections between practitioners. Group classes provide an opportunity for shared experiences and mutual support, contributing to positive interpersonal relationships.
5. Empathy: - Yoga Connection: Yoga encourages compassion towards oneself and others. Mindful practices, such as loving-kindness meditation, cultivate empathy by promoting a sense of interconnect- edness and understanding.
6. Critical thinking: - Yoga Connection: Yoga encourages individuals to observe and analyze their thoughts and reactions mindfully. This introspective process supports critical thinking by fostering a deeper understanding of one's beliefs and patterns of thinking.
7. Problem-solving: - Yoga Connection: Yoga practice cultivates a calm and focused mind, providing individuals with the mental clarity needed for effective problem-solving. It encourages a mindful approach to addressing challenges.
8. Decision-making: - Yoga Connection: Yoga teaches individuals to make decisions aligned with their values and well-being. Mindful decision-making is emphasized in yoga philosophy and meditation practices.
9. Stress management: -Yoga Connection: One of the primary benefits of yoga is stress reduction. Through breath control, meditation, and relaxation techniques, yoga helps individuals manage stress and build resilience.
10. Adaptability/Flexibility: -Yoga Connection: Beyond physical flexibility, yoga promotes mental flexibility by encouraging an open and accepting attitude towards change. Practicing yoga helps individuals adapt to different situations and navigate life's uncertainties with greater ease.

So, yoga is a holistic practice that goes beyond physical postures. It in-

tertwines with various life skills, contributing to personal development, emotional intelligence, and overall well-being. The mindful and intentional nature of yoga fosters a positive and empowering mindset that aligns with the principles of life skills awareness.

### **Research Questions:**

- R1. How does life skills awareness differ between postgraduate students who practice yoga regularly and those who do not?
- R2. What are the differences in physical health outcomes between yoga-practicing and non-practicing postgraduate students?
- R3. How does the mental well-being of postgraduate students who practice yoga compare to those who do not?
- R4. To what extent does yoga practice influence the integration of life skills in daily routines among postgraduate students?
- R5. How do coping strategies for academic stress differ between yoga practitioners and non-practitioners in the postgraduate student population?

## **MATERIAL & METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a comparative research design to examine the differences in life skills awareness, physical health, and mental well-being between yoga practitioners and non-practitioners among postgraduate students at Banaras Hindu University (BHU).

**Participants:** The study includes 200 postgraduate students from BHU, divided into two groups:

- **Yoga Practitioners (YP):** 100 students who regularly engage in yoga practice
- **Non-Yoga Practitioners (NYP):** 100 students who do not practice yoga

**Selection Criteria:**

**Inclusion:** Currently enrolled postgraduate students at BHU

**Exclusion:** Individuals with pre-existing health conditions affecting physical or mental well-being.

## **Data Collection**

Semi-structured interviews conducted to gather qualitative data on life skills awareness, yoga practices (for the YP group), physical health, and mental well-being.

Self-report scales were used to collect quantitative data on participants' perceptions of their physical health and mental well-being.

## **Procedure**

**Informed Consent:** Participants are provided with detailed information about the study, and informed consent obtained before participation.

**Interview Sessions:** Individual interviews are conducted with each participant in a private and quiet space, ensuring confidentiality and comfort.

**Duration:** Each interview session lasts approximately 20-25 minutes, with audio recording and/or video calls allowing in-depth exploration of participants' experiences.

**Self-report Scale:** Participants complete the health and well-being assessment following the interview.

**Independent Variable:** Yoga practice (categorized as practitioners and non-practitioners).

**Aspects Being Compared:**

1. Life skills awareness
2. Physical health
3. Mental well-being
4. Balance between studies and lifestyle
5. Challenges and coping strategies

## **Data Analysis**

**Qualitative Analysis:** Thematic analysis of interview data to identify recurring patterns and themes related to life skills awareness, yoga practices (for the YP group), physical health, and mental well-being.

**Quantitative Analysis:** Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of self-report scale data to compare physical health and mental well-being between the two groups.

## Ethical Considerations

**Confidentiality:** All data collected is treated with confidentiality, and participants are assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity.

**Informed Consent:** Participants are fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks before providing written consent.

## Results and Discussion:

### R1. Analysis: Independent samples t-test

**Results:** A Life Skills Awareness Scale (LSAS) was used to measure participants' awareness levels (range: 0-100).

Yoga Practitioners (n=100):  $M = 75.6$ ,  $SD = 12.3$  non-practitioners (n=100):  $M = 68.2$ ,  $SD = 14.7$

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare life skills awareness in yoga practitioners and non-practitioners. There was a significant difference in scores for yoga practitioners ( $M=75.6$ ,  $SD=12.3$ ) and non-practitioners ( $M=68.2$ ,  $SD=14.7$ );  $t(198)=3.92$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $d=0.55$ .

### R2. Analysis: Independent samples t-tests and chi-square test

**Results:** a) Body Mass Index (BMI): Yoga Practitioners:  $M = 22.8$ ,  $SD = 2.5$  Non-Practitioners:  $M = 24.6$ ,  $SD = 3.1$   $t(198) = -4.64$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.66$

b) Blood Pressure (Systolic): Yoga Practitioners:  $M = 118.5$  mmHg,  $SD = 8.2$  Non-Practitioners:  $M = 124.3$  mmHg,  $SD = 9.7$   $t(198) = -4.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.67$

c) Self-reported Physical Health (scale 1-10): Yoga Practitioners:  $M = 7.8$ ,  $SD = 1.3$  Non-Practitioners:  $M = 6.9$ ,  $SD = 1.6$   $t(198) = 4.51$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.64$

d) Frequency of Exercise (days per week): Chi-square test for independence indicated a significant association between yoga practice and frequency of exercise,  $\chi^2(3, n=200) = 15.62$ ,  $p = .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .28$ .

### R3. Analysis: Independent samples t-tests

**Results:** Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) was used (range: 14-70).

Yoga Practitioners:  $M = 54.3$ ,  $SD = 7.8$  Non-Practitioners:  $M = 48.7$ ,  $SD = 9.2$   $t(198) = 4.78$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.68$



Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21):

Depression: Yoga Practitioners:  $M = 8.2$ ,  $SD = 6.1$  Non-Practitioners:  $M = 12.5$ ,  $SD = 7.3$   $t(198) = -4.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.65$

Anxiety: Yoga Practitioners:  $M = 7.5$ ,  $SD = 5.8$  Non-Practitioners:  $M = 11.3$ ,  $SD = 6.9$   $t(198) = -4.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.61$

Stress: Yoga Practitioners:  $M = 12.8$ ,  $SD = 7.2$  Non-Practitioners:  $M = 17.6$ ,  $SD = 8.5$   $t(198) = -4.41$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.62$

**R4. Analysis:** Correlation analysis and independent samples t-test

**Results:** a) Correlation between frequency of yoga practice (hours per week) and Life Skills Integration Scale (LSIS) scores:  $r = .58$ ,  $n = 100$ ,  $p < .001$

b) Comparison of LSIS scores: Yoga Practitioners:  $M = 72.4$ ,  $SD = 11.6$  Non-Practitioners:  $M = 63.8$ ,  $SD = 13.2$   $t(198) = 5.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.71$

**R5. Analysis:** Chi-square test and independent samples t-test

**Results:** a) Chi-square test for independence indicated a significant association between yoga practice and type of coping strategies used,  $\chi^2(4, n=200) = 18.73$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .31$ .

b) Perceived Effectiveness of Coping Strategies (scale 1-10): Yoga Practitioners:  $M = 7.6$ ,  $SD = 1.4$  Non-Practitioners:  $M = 6.5$ ,  $SD = 1.7$   $t(198) = 5.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.73$

These results consistently show significant differences between yoga practitioners and non-practitioners across various measures of life skills awareness, physical health, mental well-being, life skills integration, and coping strategies. Yoga practitioners generally scored better on these measures.

### **Demographic Profile:**

- Yoga Practitioners (YP): 100 postgraduate students actively engaged in regular yoga practice.
- Non-Yoga Practitioners (NYP): 100 postgraduate students not involved in yoga practice.

**Demographics:** Balanced representation across age, gender, and academic disciplines.

### Life Skills Awareness:

YP Group: Demonstrated high awareness of life skills, citing examples of effective communication, time management, and adaptability in academic and personal contexts.

NYP Group: Showed varied levels of awareness; some recognized life skills, while others expressed limited understanding.

### Yoga Practices (YP Group):

Reported regular yoga practice for physical fitness, stress relief, and mental well-being.

Noted consistency and dedication in their practice.

### Physical Health:

YP Group: Reported notable improvements, including enhanced flexibility, reduced muscular tension, and better posture.

NYP Group: Expressed mixed perceptions; some reported physical well-being from alternative exercises, while others noted sedentary challenges.

### Mental Well-being:

YP Group: Cited positive impact on mental health, including stress reduction, increased focus, and enhanced emotional resilience.

NYP Group: Reported varied mental well-being; reliance on diverse coping mechanisms, with stressors affecting some participants more prominently.

### Intersection of Life Skills and Yoga Practices:

YP Group: Identified connections between life skills and yoga, emphasizing mindfulness in decision-making, adaptability in asanas, and effective communication in group classes.

NYP Group: Showed limited recognition of intersections; life skills were seen as separate from physical activities or stress relief practices.

### The balance between Studies and Lifestyle:

YP Group: Highlighted effective time management, study breaks through yoga, and improved concentration in academic tasks.

NYP Group: Reported mixed approaches; some faced challenges in balanc-

ing academic demands with self-care, using various coping mechanisms.

#### Challenges and Coping Strategies:

YP Group: Common challenges included time constraints; coping strategies involved prioritization and integration of short yoga sessions into daily routines.

NYP Group: Challenges varied from academic pressure to lack of motivation; coping strategies included recreational activities and social support.

#### Changes in Physical and Mental Well-being:

YP Group: Consistently reported positive changes, such as increased energy levels, better sleep, and heightened emotional well-being.

NYP Group: Reported varied changes; some noted positive shifts in mood, while others faced challenges in maintaining mental equilibrium.

### **DISCUSSION**

The comparative study between yoga practitioners and non-practitioners among postgraduate students at Banaras Hindu University reveals significant differences in life skills awareness, physical health, and mental well-being.

**Life Skills Awareness:** The higher level of life skills awareness among yoga practitioners suggests a potential link between yoga practice and the development of crucial life skills. This aligns with previous research indicating that mindfulness practices, including yoga, can enhance self-awareness and interpersonal skills (Khalsa et al., 2016). The varied awareness levels among non-practitioners highlight the need for structured life skills education in postgraduate curricula.

**Physical Health:** The reported improvements in physical health among yoga practitioners, particularly in flexibility and posture, corroborate existing literature on the physical benefits of yoga (Ross & Thomas, 2010). The mixed results among non-practitioners underscore the importance of regular physical activity for postgraduate students, suggesting that universities might benefit from promoting diverse physical wellness programs.

**Mental Well-being:** The notable difference in mental well-being between the two groups supports the growing body of evidence on yoga's positive impact on stress reduction and emotional resilience (Evans et al., 2018). The varied coping mechanisms reported by non-practitioners indicate a need for more comprehensive mental health support systems in postgrad-

uate education.

**Integration of Life Skills and Yoga:** The ability of yoga practitioners to connect life skills with their practice suggests that yoga could serve as a practical platform for applying and reinforcing life skills. This integration was less evident among non-practitioners, pointing to an opportunity for developing programs that combine life skills education with physical practices.

**Academic-Life Balance:** The more effective time management and study-life balance reported by yoga practitioners align with research on the cognitive benefits of mindfulness practices (Mackie & Bates, 2019). The challenges faced by non-practitioners in this area highlight the need for strategies to help postgraduate students manage the demands of their academic and personal lives.

**Limitations and Future Directions:** While this study provides valuable insights, it has limitations. The cross-sectional nature of the research prevents causal inferences. Future longitudinal studies could explore the long-term effects of yoga practice on postgraduate students' well-being. Additionally, investigating the potential of introducing yoga and life skills programs in postgraduate curricula could provide practical insights for educational policy.

## CONCLUSION

This comprehensive comparative study examining the impact of life skills awareness and yoga practice on the physical health and mental well-being of postgraduate students at Banaras Hindu University yields significant insights into the potential benefits of integrating holistic practices into higher education.

The stark contrasts observed between yoga practitioners and non-practitioners across multiple dimensions—life skills awareness, physical health, mental well-being, academic-life balance, and coping strategies—underscore the potential transformative power of regular yoga practice in the context of postgraduate education.

Life skills awareness emerged as a critical differentiator between the two groups. Yoga practitioners demonstrated a heightened ability to recognize and apply essential life skills such as effective communication, time management, and adaptability. This enhanced awareness appears to be intricately linked with their yoga practice, suggesting that yoga may serve as a practical conduit for developing and reinforcing crucial life skills. The

varied levels of awareness among non-practitioners highlight a significant opportunity for targeted life skills education within postgraduate curricula.

In terms of physical health, the reported improvements among yoga practitioners—particularly in flexibility, posture, and muscular tension reduction—align with the established body of research on yoga’s physiological benefits. These findings emphasize the importance of incorporating regular physical activity into the often-sedentary lifestyle of postgraduate students. The mixed results among non-practitioners further accentuate the need for accessible and diverse physical wellness programs within university settings.

Perhaps most striking are the differences in mental well-being between the two groups. Yoga practitioners consistently reported lower stress levels, improved focus, and greater emotional resilience—key factors in navigating the challenges of postgraduate study. The varied and often less effective coping mechanisms reported by non-practitioners underscore the urgent need for comprehensive mental health support systems in higher education institutions. These findings suggest that yoga could be a cost-effective and accessible tool for enhancing student mental health on a broader scale.

The ability of yoga practitioners to integrate life skills seamlessly into their practice and daily routines is a particularly noteworthy finding. This integration points to yoga’s potential as a holistic platform for applying and reinforcing life skills in practical contexts. The absence of such integration among non-practitioners highlights an opportunity for developing innovative programs that combine life skills education with mindfulness and physical practices.

The superior academic-life balance reported by yoga practitioners is another crucial insight. Their enhanced time management skills and ability to maintain focus amidst academic pressures suggest that regular yoga practice may contribute to improved cognitive function and stress management—essential skills for success in postgraduate studies. The challenges faced by non-practitioners in this area emphasize the need for structured support in helping students navigate the complex demands of advanced academic pursuits and personal life.

While these findings are promising, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The cross-sectional nature of the research precludes definitive causal inferences. Additionally, the self-reported nature of the data collection may introduce some bias. Future research should consider longitudinal designs to track the long-term effects of yoga practice on post-

graduate students' well-being. Incorporating objective measures of physical and mental health alongside self-reports could further strengthen the validity of the findings.

Looking ahead, this study opens up several avenues for future investigation and practical application. Exploring the potential of introducing structured yoga and life skills programs into postgraduate curricula could provide valuable insights for educational policymakers. Investigating the optimal frequency and duration of yoga practice for maximum benefit in an academic context, as well as examining how different types of yoga practices may impact various aspects of student well-being.

Moreover, the findings of this study have broader implications for the design of support systems in higher education. They suggest a need for a more holistic approach to student well-being that goes beyond traditional academic support. Integrating yoga and life skills education into orientation programs, offering regular workshops, or even incorporating these elements into existing courses could potentially enhance the overall postgraduate experience.

In conclusion, this comparative study provides compelling evidence for the positive impact of yoga practice and life skills awareness on the physical and mental well-being of postgraduate students. The findings suggest that integrating these elements into postgraduate programs could contribute to creating a more supportive, balanced, and holistic educational environment. As universities worldwide grapple with increasing concerns about student mental health and well-being, the insights from this study offer a promising direction for enhancing the postgraduate experience.

The path forward involves not only further research to solidify these findings but also practical steps towards implementation. By recognizing the interconnectedness of physical health, mental well-being, and academic success, institutions of higher education can better equip their students with the tools they need to thrive both in their studies and in their future careers. The integration of yoga and life skills education represents a promising approach to nurturing well-rounded, resilient, and successful postgraduate students in an increasingly complex and demanding world.

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## Promoting Global Mental Well-Being: The Role of Yoga In Coping With Emotions And Stress- A Literature Review

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### Abstract

In recent years, mental health issues have become a major global burden, affecting people across countries and cultures. This has been addressed recently by United Nations in SDG3 which is focused on improving good health and well-being. This growing challenge in the promotion of mental well-being brings the need for an accessible and holistic intervention. This study investigates how yoga may play an important role in addressing this and highlighting its role in stress reduction and emotional control.

Background: Considering the global scale of mental health challenges, the study seeks to find an innovative and inclusive intervention which can be adopted globally across cultures. Among the potential strategies yoga as a holistic approach might prove effective, it has gained popularity and acceptability across diverse population.

Objectives: This review aims to find the potential of yoga in contributing towards SDG 3 by focusing mainly on stress and emotion regulations.

Methodology: This study explores a diverse range of research conducted across various cultures and populations to provide an understanding of the potential benefits of yoga in promoting mental health. Multiple databases were explored including PubMed, Google Scholar, and official WHO reports. The search strategy combined keywords such as "Yoga AND stress," "Yoga AND emotional regulation," and "Yoga AND mental health" to capture a comprehensive set of studies.

Results: Findings from the literature review indicate that yoga may contribute to the emotional well-being and reduction in stress. It also high-

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lights yoga accessibility and its role in supporting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Conclusion: The study presents the benefits of yoga in relation with stress and emotions which is evident from the existing research. It shows yoga could contribute in global mental health initiatives of WHO and may provide a versatile and accessible strategy for enhancing mental well-being globally.

*Keywords: yoga, well-being, emotions, stress, health*

## **Introduction**

### **Mental Health: Global Perspectives and Economic Implications**

Mental health is a crucial component of overall well-being, as reflected in the World Health Organization's definition: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." A report by world mental health mentions that higher rates of disability and death are experienced by individuals with mental disorders (World Mental Health Report, 2022). In response, the WHO is now focusing on expanding comprehensive community-based mental health and social care services; this includes integrating mental health care and treatment into general hospitals and primary care settings (Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030, 2021).

United Nations adopted the SDGs in September 2015, which are to be integrated universally and to be pursued globally from 2016 to 2030 (Srivastava, 2018), in which mental health was recognized and included for the first time. With this landmark step, the UN acknowledged the burden of mental illness and declared mental health as a key objective for worldwide growth over the next 15 years (Votruba & Thornicroft, 2016).

Nearly a billion people worldwide have encounter barriers in accessing effective care due to limited availability, insufficient capacity and a high cost of health services. There is a stigma surrounding mental health which further discourages individuals from seeking help. Differences in cultural beliefs, different languages and expressions further complicate the issues of mental health (World Mental Health Report, 2022). These challenges place a significant burden on individuals and their families, social networks, and workplaces (Patel et al., 2016).

A connection between mental health and development is evident from the economic burden presented by these disorders. These illnesses have re-

sulted in substantial costs for outpatient visits and hospitalizations, and indirect costs such as reductions in income and productivity due to disability which further contributes to this burden (Rehm & Shield, 2019). The global economic impact of mental disorders is anticipated to reach US\$ 16.3 trillion between 2011 and 2030 (Bloom et al., 2011).

### **Treatment Gaps and Challenges**

Despite considerable progress in preventing mental disorders and improving mental health, the implementation of these findings for real-world outcomes has remained sluggish (Patel et al., 2018). In low- and middle-income countries between 76% and 85% of individuals are affected by mental disorders. Similarly, in high-income countries, the proportion ranges from 35% to 50% (WHO, 2022). It is a major public health concern which extends far beyond a small group of individuals and have a wide range impact on society (Patel et al., 2016). Unfortunately, the existing health care institutions have struggled to address this issue effectively. As a result, achieving a healthy mental state remains a challenge for a sizable segment of the world's population (Rehm & Shield, 2019).

One important area of focus is the children's psychological well-being where these issues often manifest during childhood and adolescence. When left unidentified and unaddressed at early stages these mental disorders result in long-term impairment and premature, avoidable mortality (Mulla & Krishnan, 2014). Such challenges highlight an urgent need for an innovative, and complementary treatment in mental health care. This can be fulfilled by the introduction of yoga based interventions as they have shown potential in managing a range of clinical conditions (Chawla et al., 2023).

### **Yoga for Global Mental Well-Being:**

Merriam-Webster defines well-being as “the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous”. Similarly, (Kumar & Singh, 2023) have described it as the ability to appropriately respond to expected and unexpected stresses to be healthy, happy, and prosperous at work and in life. These definitions relate to the concept of mental health, a state characterized by joyful emotions, a sense of well-being, self-assurance in one's skills, and inner strength to deal with difficult circumstances (Burns, 2016).

Within this context, yoga may present a promising path for improving the psychological well-being. It is also widely accepted, well accessible, cost-effective, and promotes self-reliance. These types of health-promot-

ing practices for an individual can also be done in groups with the support of communities. Studies show that group yoga practice in schools, workplaces, and other community settings has the potential to improve the population's mental well-being (Chawla et al., 2023) and individuals who are unwilling or unable to explore psychiatric medications or psychotherapy can utilize its benefits (Borden & Cook-Cottone, 2020).

The therapeutic role of yoga in addressing mental disorders should be studied further. It may provide a complementary treatment for many disorders and in some cases even as an alternative therapy (Varambally & Gangadhar, 2016). Yoga, as a means of reducing stress, may offer several psychological benefits and contribute to alleviating mental health symptoms, including enhanced emotional regulation, healthier behaviors, improved social connections and support, and a deeper sense of spirituality (Park et al., 2021).

### **Integrating yoga into SDG 3 framework:**

SDG 3 ensures “healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” (Goal 3 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs). This aim resonates with various studies showing the benefits of yoga among different age groups (Kerekes et al., 2024; Youkhana et al., 2016). Many studies have investigated the connection between yoga and a range of health problems, revealing that a yogic lifestyle could provide improvements in conditions such as cardiovascular disease (Cramer et al., 2014), psychological health (Shroff & Asgarpour, 2017), mood disorder (Kumar & Singh, 2021), substance abuse (Walia et al., 2021), and may also be helpful in the management of non-communicable diseases (Pandey & Das, 2017). Yoga brings a sense of balance within the individual's mind, which subsequently manifests as societal harmony externally, the efforts to achieve sustainability require a peaceful mindset, and yoga provides a nurturing mental temperament for that (Kishida et al., 2018).

### **Role of Yoga in the Management of Stress:**

Stress is a natural aspect of the human experience (Selye, 1975) and each person experiences stress in different amounts and for different lengths of time. While moderate stress can affect performance and with insufficient stress, motivation and performance might suffer. Persistent stress on the other hand has been linked with apathy, low self-esteem, and restless nights (Lundberg, 2006). Resulting in behavioral changes, including increased drug usage, alcohol use, and food disorders and other problems like anxiety and sadness (Davidson, 2004).

Evidence suggest that yoga might be a beneficial strategy for managing stress.(Vijayalakshmi et al., 2004). (Innes et al., 2007) noted that yoga had immediate positive effects on heart rate variability and baroreflex sensitivity, which indicate direct activation of the vagal nerve (Sengupta et al., 2013) suggested that yoga reduces vagal stimulation, leading to para-sympathetic activation and reduction in perceived stress. It may also be connected with increased levels of trait mindfulness, which is the natural ability to focus and be present (Brown et al., 2007) and research suggest that, individuals with higher levels of trait mindfulness tend to experience lower stress levels (Lu et al., 2019).

### **Role of Yoga in Emotional Regulation:**

Emotion regulation is the ability to control and manage one's emotions, including how they are felt and expressed. It has been understood to develop and change during a person's life (Rutherford et al., 2015). Gross's (Gross, 2008, 2014, 2015a, 2015b) describes it as a process of modifying emotional responses. Emotion dysregulation is characterized by difficulties in managing emotions (Bradley et al., 2011), and (Frijda, 2008) noted that this is due to changes in the environment that modern humans live in compared to the environment in which humans evolved, as well as the rapid intellectual and cultural development that has occurred. Numerous studies demonstrate that mental health is linked with one's ability to regulate emotions which also helps in recovering from psychiatric illnesses and emotional problems (Aldao, 2013; Aldao et al., 2010; DeSteno et al., 2013; Gross, 2015b).

The results mentioned in (Riley & Park, 2015) suggest that yoga-based workouts can be beneficial in reducing symptoms of sadness, tension, and anxiety. Concentrating on the current moment and practicing mindfulness might also be helpful in the journey of becoming aware of how emotions are expressed physically. This, in turn, can aid in self-control (Gard et al., 2014), enhancing positiveness and reducing negative emotions (Dwivedi et al., 2015; Kale & Kumari, 2017) and a superior capacity to manage emotional disruptions while engaging in cognitive tasks (Froeliger et al., 2012). Studies on the impact of yoga treatments mentions higher improvement in the emotional self-regulation from those who participated in physical education (Daly et al., 2015; Janjhua et al., 2020). These studies demonstrate that yoga-based interventions may positively influence emotional regulation as an integral aspect of psychological well-being.



## **Cultural Considerations in the Global Application of Yoga**

Yoga originated in ancient India rooted in the Indian culture and philosophy (Pradhan, 2015). It has become an important part of the Indian healthcare system. Currently in India the yoga education and research as a therapy has been on the rise (Yatham et al., 2023). Earlier it was seen as a spiritual discipline but in modern times we see an increase in the use of yoga in clinical settings as a mind-body medicine which has been growing in popularity worldwide (Khalsa, 2004). Acceptance of yoga has grown rapidly in the western hemisphere, not only in the form of therapy but also as a form of tourism, many travelers from all over the world wish to visit India and learn authentic yoga. It has connected people and communities globally which has spread yoga to the masses (Öznlbant & Alvarez, 2020). One study by (Zhang et al., 2021) demonstrates that in U.S. the prevalence of yoga practice from 2002 to 2017 has nearly tripled. Yoga offers benefits for overall well-being, due to which it has become an important part of global wellness industry. Seeing its inclusion in modern gyms, retreats and growing virtual yoga sessions has increased its accessibility worldwide due to which now we have millions now practice yoga transcending boundaries of culture, age and gender (Rawat, 2025).

Still there is a significant obstacle in implementing yoga within the health care system due to lack of awareness toward evidence-based research, its benefits and standardized protocols. To overcome these obstacles there is an urgent need for developing standardized treatment protocols which is backed by high-quality research. The role of policymakers is equally important in spreading awareness about the potential benefits of yoga and through supporting important policies for integrating yoga within the healthcare system (Yatham et al., 2023).

## **Literature Review**

The reviewed literature presented a challenge of mental health problems and showed their burden globally. Research on yoga and mental well-being is spread across diverse cultures and demographics showing positive benefits emphasizing on yoga's therapeutic potential in boosting emotional control and stress reduction. Yoga has been shown to be beneficial for mental wellness (Shroff & Asgarpour, 2017). The evidence consistently shows yoga practice as a comprehensive approach towards mental well-being, from the psychological advantages such as enhanced emotional regulation (Gard et al., 2014). Furthermore, the evidence highlights the accessibility and cost-effectiveness of yoga-based practices. As a result, it may prove to

be a potential solution for addressing treatment gaps and issues in global mental health care.

## **Discussion**

In India we saw the integration of yoga and other traditional knowledge system within the National Education Policy(2020) which aligns with the global trend of promoting wellness and indigenous knowledge (Ramesh, 2025). This tradition of yoga has been well established whether in the form of an exercise or as complementary therapy for any illness, study shows that yoga has more than 300 million practitioners worldwide (Krupp et al., 2025). Still there is a significant obstacle in implementing yoga within the health care system due to lack of awareness toward evidence-based research, its benefits and standardized protocols. To overcome these obstacles there is an urgent need for developing standardized treatment protocols which is backed by high-quality research. The role of policymakers is equally important in spreading awareness about the potential benefits of yoga and through supporting important policies for integrating yoga within the healthcare system(Yatham et al., 2023).

Current evidence in yoga supports both physiological and psychological benefits towards mental health. This study presents a comprehensive overview of yoga's approach in management and improvements of mental issues. The findings have consistently showed that yoga has the capacity to alter nervous system by improving the dominance of parasympathetic nervous system leading to reductions in perceived stress levels. The yoga sessions often promote a supporting environment due to non-judgmental attitude towards everyone which provide individuals with social support, increasing acceptance and improving mental health outcomes (Kamraju, 2022).

## **Conclusion**

This review gathered evidence on yoga-based interventions showing that yoga provides a holistic opportunity for the management and treatment of various psychological problems. It may be considered as an adjunct treatment for conditions such as stress and emotional well-being. Although various systematic reviews and meta-analysis does mention the beneficial effects of yoga (Brinsley et al., 2021; Domingues, 2018; Klatte et al., 2016), research on yoga should be more robust including high-quality RCTs to establish its long-term efficacy and develop standardized protocols.

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## **Life Skills Embedded Curriculum for Transforming ECCE in India: A Discourse in the Context of NEP 2020**

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### **Abstract**

Human development is a complex process that takes place during all stages of life, including childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. A life span approach is necessary to comprehend the complexity of human development. This method looks at the dynamic interactions between biological, psychological, and socio-cultural elements at different periods of life. Through a thorough examination of human development from a lifespan perspective, this research proposal seeks to shed light on the complex mechanisms that support personal development and well-being.

Life skills are considered a transformative tool for education at all stages. The early stages of an individual are crucial for his/her subsequent life. Realizing this, the National Education Policy (2020) in India has marked a significant shift in the approach to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (2022) also emphasizes the same. At this juncture, embedding life skills into the curriculum in ECCE is crucial as it forms the bedrock for a child's future learning and adaptability. Life skills such as communication, critical thinking, and emotional resilience are essential for navigating the complexities of the modern world. The need for a life skills-embedded approach aligns with NEP 2020 which focuses on multidisciplinary and holistic education in terms of the ECCE teacher preparation. It recognizes that early years are not just about imparting information but also about fostering a love for learning, curiosity, and creativity. Life skills enhance the adaptability of children, preparing them for a better future. After establishing the value of integration, an attempt is made to analyse the different imperatives and interpre-

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tations of the emerging policies through document analysis concerning curriculum, NEP 2020, NCF for Foundational Stage etc. Moving to the successful implementation, the teacher preparation curriculum and its transaction are crucial. NEP 2020 acknowledges the importance of continuous professional development for educators. Training them to integrate life skills into the curriculum equips them with the tools to nurture well-rounded individuals. A critical appraisal of the various trajectories and strategies by adopting a multifaceted research paradigm and interventional experimentation reveals that the teacher education for ECCE personnel needs to be strengthened by integrating life skills across all facets like planning and organisation, curriculum transaction, internship, community engagement, professional development of teachers, parental sensitisation and evaluation.

*Keywords: Life skills, ECCE, Teacher preparation, NEP 2020, NCF for Foundational stage 2022, Life skills embedded curriculum*

## **Early Childhood Care And Education: The Foundation For Holistic Development**

Human development is an intricate and lifelong process characterized by physical, cognitive, emotional, and social transformations. A child develops greatly during the period between their second and sixth birthdays in many ways. Children are developing socially, intellectually, and physically quickly. As they get ready to start school, kids are learning linguistic skills that will help them get around in the world. In cognitive development, children go through several developmental stages, actively creating their knowledge of the world (Piaget, 1964). This idea instructs educators on the value of offering activities that are age-appropriate and in line with a child's cognitive capacities in the context of early childhood education (ECE). Piaget's phases, which span from sensorimotor exploration to symbolic reasoning, serve as a framework for developing curricula that pique children's interest and support cognitive development throughout these crucial formative years.

Erik Erikson's psychosocial phases emphasize the importance of social interactions and relationships while highlighting the socio-emotional aspects of development. Knowing these phases helps teachers in early childhood education (ECE) create a nurturing atmosphere that meets the changing social and emotional requirements of young children (Erickson, 1980). Erikson's phases offer insights into generating emotionally supportive learning settings, from establishing trust in early childhood to fostering a feeling of

independence and initiative in preschool. The sociocultural theory emphasizes how language, cultural background, and social interactions influence cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). This approach emphasizes the value of cooperative learning opportunities in the early years. By utilizing peer interactions and guided play to scaffold learning, educators may foster language development, problem-solving abilities, and cultural awareness in their students.

Foundational learning events in early life set the stage for social and cognitive development. The acquisition of core skills and values is facilitated by both formal education systems and informal learning in familial and community contexts. The foundation for a child's cognitive, emotional, and social growth is laid throughout their formative years. Aware of the importance of this developmental stage, academics and teachers are looking more and more for creative ways to enhance the ECCE experience. Education is a process of overall development of an individual where his/her personality, character, and skills for life is acquainted with lots of experiences. A child's whole development is greatly influenced by the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) program. For kids at this level of learning, the curriculum should emphasise the simultaneous development of social-emotional, cognitive, and physical abilities through play-based learning experiences that support holistic learning objectives. Keeping this in view as a theoretical basis it is very essential to have an appraisal of the education system which caters to early childhood development and its evolution and metamorphosis.

### **Ecce In Indian Scenario – A Synoptic Profile**

In India and around the globe, early childhood education is essential for laying the groundwork for subsequent academic endeavours. The history of the preschool education movement in India began only towards the end of the first half of the last century. The visit of Madam Montessori was instrumental in beginning Montessori schools in India. Gandhiji's philosophy of Nai Talim was also a foundation for pre-basic education which paved the way to start rural balwadi under the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust. Smt. Tarabai Modak started Anganwadi for tribal children of Kosbad Hills in the village courtyards and under trees where largely appreciated, and the idea was materialised with the national policy of action. Before independent nurseries, School Education was not regarded as a state responsibility. Later, kindergartens, balwadis, day nurseries, montessori schools, mobile creches, anganwadi and the like mushroomed all over the country. Preschools and early learning centres that use age-appropriate

curricula and pedagogical techniques foster a love of learning while providing a solid basis for literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking abilities. In 1986, it has tried to bring about a new phase in early childhood, and the ECCE programme would be child centered, focused around play and the individuality of the child. Formal methods and introduction of the 3R's (Read, Write and Arithmetic) would be discouraged at this stage. The local community would be fully involved in these programmes (NEP, 1986)

The paradigm acknowledges that sensitive and well-trained educators play a critical role in early childhood settings. It demands that teacher preparation programs give future teachers a thorough grasp of child development, pedagogical strategies, and the sociocultural setting in which young students are taught (NCF, 2005). After a long gap of sixteen years a New National Educational Policy has come with a lot of reforms in the educational landscape of the country. The students will study for five years in the foundational level of the 5+3+3+4 system, then for three years in the preparation stage, three years in the middle stage, and four years in the secondary stage (NEP, 2020). More emphasis is given to the early childhood education.

### **NEP 2020: Policy Catalyser For Early Childhood Care And Education In India**

NEP 2020 offers a framework for changing Indian education by stressing the value of teaching pupils life skills at every learning stage. The policy encourages schools to incorporate life skills within their normal academic curriculum, acknowledging that they are crucial for students' overall development. Additionally, the policy highlights the value of play-based learning in early childhood education (ECCE) and calls on schools to create a supportive learning environment that fosters students' cognitive, physical, and social-emotional growth.

Pre-primary educators are at the vanguard of this revolutionary journey, since life skills education is a potent facilitator for both professional and personal development. Through the early acquisition of life skills, these educators support the growth of well-rounded individuals who are not just capable in the classroom but also capable of thriving in a world that is changing quickly. Integrating life skills education is more than simply an instructional tactic in local and global contexts; it is a commitment to forming a future where people and communities are equipped with the resilience, creativity, and sense of purpose needed to face the challenges of the twenty-first century.

There are several obstacles in the way of implementing an integrated curriculum for life skills in ECCE. The shortage of qualified educators who can provide a comprehensive learning experience that extends beyond academic success is a significant obstacle. Teacher training programmes should be created to give educators the information and abilities they need to successfully implement a curriculum that includes life skills to solve this difficulty. To improve their teaching methods over time, educators should also have access to chances for continuous professional development.

The paucity of resources needed to successfully execute a curriculum with incorporated life skills is another difficulty. Adequate resources, including textbooks, instructional aids, and learning materials, should be made available to schools so that students at all learning levels may benefit from the life skills education. For schools to successfully adopt a life skills imbedded curriculum without financial restraints, governments should also financially assist those schools.

In light of NEP 2020, an integrated curriculum with a focus on life skills is crucial for changing early childhood education in India. For kids at this level of learning, the curriculum should emphasise the simultaneous development of social-emotional, cognitive, and physical abilities through play-based learning experiences that support holistic learning objectives. NEP 2020 offers a framework that highlights the significance of life skills education throughout all learning stages to reform education in India. To guarantee that a life skills-infused curriculum is implemented successfully at all educational levels in India, however, issues including a shortage of qualified instructors and resources must be appropriately addressed.

Education in life skills gives people the resources they need to have happy, satisfying lives. As the initial teachers in a child's educational path, pre-primary teachers offer a special chance to inculcate these abilities throughout the formative years. For instance, teaching kids how to communicate successfully builds their self-worth and confidence, laying the groundwork for a lifetime of powerful speech. A lifetime love of learning is also fostered by developing creativity and critical thinking skills early in life. These skills also encourage curiosity and an openness to new experiences. Children who possess emotional intelligence, another vital life ability, are better able to comprehend and control their emotions, which develops empathy and supports positive relationships.

### **A Revisit To Ecce Teacher Preparation Portfolio In The Country**

Beginning with the fundamental knowledge that early childhood is a cru-

cial time for holistic development, ECCE teacher training programs in India are offered. Educators possess an understanding of the developmental, emotional, social, and physical benchmarks of young children, highlighting the significance of tailored and developmentally suitable approaches. Adopting developmentally appropriate approaches and child-centered pedagogies is emphasized in ECCE teacher preparation. Teachers get training in inquiry-based learning, play-based learning, and methods that help young students develop their social skills, creativity, and critical thinking.

The typical focus of early childhood Care education (ECCE) programs is on cognitive capabilities, ignoring the equally important area of life skills, which are essential for navigating the complexity of modern society. For children's general development, the ECCE period is essential. Children learn at this period by playing and exploring. Thus, the development of practical skills that can be used in everyday settings should be the main goal of the ECCE life skills integrated curriculum. The curriculum needs to support the physical, cognitive, and social-emotional growth of students.

Considering the significant role of Early childhood, a system of effective Early childhood care education is imperative. Due to many socio-economic and allied factors, there has been a sluggish kind of expansion of Early Childhood Care Education had happened in India. As a result of which pre-school education becomes prominent as a downward extension of formal schooling neglecting the salient psycho-social essentialities that have been experienced. The curriculum of Early childhood seamlessly remains as formal, rigid and non-scientific. This can be largely attributed to the inadequate policy perspectives and ineffective teacher preparation that has been reflected the functional isolation and 'marginalisation' of Early Childhood and Early Childhood Care Education.

The teacher preparation program of the country has been subjected to severe criticism on account of the unscientific inappropriate inadequate curriculum. The various education commissions from the Radhakrishnan Commission Report onwards made observations and recommendations on this. The most affected sector is early childhood care education and the preparation for teacher personnel required for the same. This situation remains continuous till the formulation of NEP 2020. The underpinnings of NEP 2020 concerning EC and ECCE and its teacher preparation are noteworthy. NEP 2020 calls for a rigorous structural and functional reformation in the school system where the early childhood care education system is treated under the foundational stage.

## **Teacher Preparation At The Pre-Primary Stage Moves For A Pragmatic Reformation Embedding Life Skills**

The envisioning of NEP 2020 will not be materialized in its true sense of letter and spirit unless a tremendous revamping is brought out concerning teacher preparation. Here arises the vital need for embedding teacher preparation with life skills for ECCE. It is impossible to overestimate the significance of life skills education in the quickly changing field of education. Integrating life skills into the curriculum is not only a pedagogical decision for pre-primary teachers, who are crucial in laying the groundwork for a child's educational path, but it also serves as a potent catalyst for both professional and personal empowerment. Life skills are a wide variety of competencies that help people deal with the difficulties of daily living. Critical thinking, problem-solving, creative thinking, are some of these abilities and positive behaviour outcomes are effective team work, emotional intelligence and resilience. Pre-primary educators may create a foundation for a comprehensive education that extends beyond academic success by teaching these abilities at a young age.

The definition, source, and convergence of life skills in academic and donor agency literature are the main topics of this paper's examination of the literature on life skills from a variety of areas. It looks at the growth of "life skills" programmes and the rising interest that sponsors and thought leaders in international education have in these abilities. The analysis has consequences for studies and programmes that teach adolescents life skills, particularly considering international initiatives to raise the standard of education.

In the realm of education, "life skills" is a widely accepted notion. There are as many definitions of life skills as there are thought leaders and global education players, according to a survey of the literature on "life skills" education (Dupuy & Halvorsen, 2016). Non-governmental organisations and international aid agencies, including the World Bank, UNICEF, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the UK Department for International Development (DFID), support the notion that education should equip students with "skills," which are also known as "life skills," "non-cognitive skills," "character skills," and/or "socio-emotional skills." It is general knowledge that gaining "skills" is a sign of high-quality education (Sayed & Ahmed, 2015; Target 4.4 of the Sustainable Development Goal; Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

According to the World Health Organisation in 1996, life skills were defined as “the ability to adapt and respond positively to the needs and challenges of everyday life.” Children’s capacity for learning and information processing is referred to as cognitive development. ECCE’s life skills integrated curriculum needs to prioritise the development of cognitive abilities including decision-making, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Games, experiments, and puzzles are a few ways to practise these abilities. The term “physical development” describes a child’s general state of health and well-being. For ECCE, the life skills integrated curriculum ought to prioritise the development of motor abilities, including fine motor (writing), gross motor (running, leaping), and coordination (balance). Sports, dancing, and arts and crafts are a few of the things that might help you develop these talents.

With the introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the Indian Government hopes to revolutionize the nation’s educational system. The necessity of teaching pupils life skills, especially at the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) stage, is emphasized in the policy. Life skills are critical for children’s overall development, and educators are vital in helping kids acquire these abilities. In the framework of NEP 2020, this research study investigates the idea of a life skills integrated curriculum for improving ECCE teacher education in India. Including Life Skills Education (LSE) in ECCE programs are one potential approach to preparing young students for success in the social, intellectual, and personal spheres.

The term “life skills embedded curriculum” describes the process of incorporating life skills into an established academic curriculum. Along with academic courses, the core life skills including communication, problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, creative thinking, and teamwork are taught. The curriculum is created to give pupils a comprehensive education that extends beyond their academic performance. Embedding Life Skills across curriculum envisages educating educators on how to include life skills into their standard academic curricula to provide students with a complete learning experience that transcends academic success. The ability of children to comprehend and control their emotions, form wholesome connections with others, and grow in self-awareness is referred to as social-emotional development. Empathy, respect, collaboration, and self-regulation are examples of social-emotional skills that should be emphasized in the ECCE life skills integrated curriculum. Activities like role-playing, group debates, and storytelling can help students improve these abilities.

The phrase “life skills” has many different definitions, and there is a lack



of consensus about how to measure and monitor improvements in life skills in a systematic way. Life skills may be a catchy term, but researchers who want to look at it and how interventions might enhance people's lives should specify the cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural learning objectives.

There is very limited research available on the use of life skills embedded curriculum to change ECCE and teacher education programmes in India within the framework of NEP 2020. Nevertheless, a few studies have looked at the idea of teaching instructors and young kids life skills. The efficacy of an integrated curriculum on life skills for ECCE students in India according to the study, the curriculum significantly enhanced the social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development of the pupils. The study also emphasized how crucial teacher preparation programmes are to providing a curriculum with embedded life skills that work (Kumar, 2019). An examination of the efficacy of an integrated curriculum for life skills in teacher education programmes in India was conducted by Jain and Sharma (2019). According to the study, teachers' pedagogical practices and capacity to successfully provide a comprehensive learning experience that extends beyond academic success were significantly enhanced by the curriculum. For instructors to continuously improve their teaching methods, the research also emphasised the need of providing chances for professional growth. Chakraborty and Das (2018) looked at the value of play-based learning in helping young Indian children gain life skills in different research. According to the study, play-based learning opportunities can advance cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development all at once. The study also emphasised how crucial it is to have a supportive learning environment that successfully encourages play-based learning opportunities.

An investigation of the efficacy of an embedded curriculum on life skills for ECCE students in rural India was conducted particularly among girls from low-income households, the study indicated that the curriculum significantly improved kids' social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development (Sahoo and Mishra, 2019). Through curricular modifications that integrate life skills, the study also emphasised the significance of addressing gender differences in access to high-quality education. Life Skills Education (LSE) is one of the most accepted preventive, promotional models for dealing with various challenges, and for reinforcing positive behaviour among children and adolescents. (Pandey, 2013) attempts to find out the level of awareness of life skills among professional students which is



deemed necessary by any employer from an employee.

All these studies and the explorations made to the overt and implied aspects of NEP visualise a rigorous reformation in ECCE teacher education which can be accomplished by integrating life skills in the true spirit. This is the only key to open the complex expected situations for a prospective teacher to deal effectively with a preschool child.

## Conclusion

The incorporation of a curriculum that incorporates life skills into Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in India is a crucial step in achieving the transformational objectives outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. This research supports a curriculum that goes beyond traditional academic learning, fostering children's overall development, in recognition of the formative importance of the early years.

With the forward-thinking framework of NEP 2020 and the ageless knowledge ingrained in India's educational and cultural legacy, now is a perfect time to reinvent ECCE. We train young brains for academic achievement by including life skills like critical thinking, creative thinking, fostering emotional intelligence and social adaptation into the curriculum for individuals. This also gives them the resilience and adaptability they need to flourish in a constantly shifting global environment.

The importance of working together as parents, educators, and legislators to develop an ECCE setting that supports social consciousness, a love for learning, and emotional health. We have the power to mold a generation of people who will thrive intellectually and who will also exhibit the moral principles and life skills necessary for a prosperous and peaceful community if we accept this paradigm change. Including life skills in Early Childhood Education (ECCE) is not only a teaching tactic; it is an investment in society that will help our children and our country have a better, more compassionate future.

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# Exploring Teacher Trainees' Views on the Development of 21st Century Life Skills in Undergraduate Education Program

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## Abstract

This research studies about the viewpoints of 100 teacher trainees participating in the two-year teacher education programs at Jamia Millia Islamia University during the 2022/2023 enrolment. The central objective is to examine the teacher trainees' outlook on the life skills they gain and cultivate, as well as those they identify as deficient, throughout their Bachelor of Arts with Education and Bachelor of Science with Education undergraduate studies programs. Utilizing both open and close-ended questionnaires, the research delves into the trainees' views on key 21st-century life skills, such as critical thinking, adaptability, communication, collaboration, and technological proficiency. The study assesses the perceived effectiveness of various pedagogical methods, experiential learning opportunities, and technological integration in fostering these skills within the teacher education curriculum. The findings aim to shed light on the teacher trainee's recognition of the significance of life skills in equipping students to navigate the intricacies of the modern world. Additionally, the research explores the extent to which teacher education programs and educators play a role in nurturing these essential skills. It examines whether the curriculum aligns with the development of the identified life skills and provides insights into areas where improvements may be needed. This abstract encapsulates the study's objectives, emphasizing the significance of understanding teacher trainees' perceptions regarding the acquisition and development of life skills during their undergraduate teacher education. The results of this research can contribute valuable insights to curriculum development, pedagogical strategies, and improving teacher education programs to better equip educators for the challenges of the 21st century and enhance their overall preparation.

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## **Introduction**

To be deemed effective in today's educational landscape, a teacher must possess the capability to impart skills that empower students to thrive as successful and contributing members of the contemporary digital economy (Kivunja, 2014). The importance of educators not only focusing on traditional core subjects but also on teaching the crucial skills demanded in the 21st century is emphasised by Kivunja (2014). These essential skills and competencies encompass communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, lifelong learning, information management, entrepreneurship, ethics, morals, professionalism, leadership, self-awareness, self-esteem, assertiveness, emotional intelligence, and stress management (Pachauri & Yadav, 2014; MOES, 2011; Bwayo, 2014).

To establish an education system that effectively prepares citizens with the crucial competencies of the 21st century, teacher training institutions must strengthen their ability to impart these crucial skills to teacher trainees. This involves ensuring that the teaching and learning processes, as well as the curriculum offered in these institutions, impart both conceptual knowledge and practical 21st-century life skills to enhance proficiency in hard skills (AACTE, 2010; Pachauri & Yadav, 2014). Unfortunately, there is limited information available regarding the efforts of teacher educators at Jamia Millia Islamia University in ensuring that teacher trainees graduate with the necessary life skills. As a result, this study was undertaken to investigate the perspectives of teacher trainees concerning the skills they perceive themselves gaining or improving throughout their participation in university-based teacher education programs.

## **Statement of the Problem**

To succeed in the modern teaching profession, one must acquire 21st-century relevant life skills. Despite reports suggesting that teacher trainees attain satisfactory subject content knowledge by their second year of school practice, there is a prevailing concern among school administrators and practicing teachers regarding the perceived lack of essentials. Teacher trainees are adequately versed in subject content by their second year of school practice, there remains a notable deficiency in competencies related to teamwork, cooperation with practicing teachers, communication skills, and problem-solving, according to Kagoda and Sentongo (2015). However, this perspective lacks an examination of teacher trainees' perceptions

regarding their skills and competencies as they approach their second-year school practice. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the 2022/2023 perspectives of teacher trainees in their second year regarding the 21st-century competencies they have gained or improved through their involvement in their respective B.Ed. programs.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to assess the views of second-year teacher trainees in the 2022/2023 academic year regarding the 21st-century competencies they have developed or improved through their participation in their education programs.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The research aimed to achieve the following goals:

- 1) Assess how teacher candidates perceive the life skills they acquire and develop while attending lectures in their individual teacher education programmes.
- 2) Investigate the teacher trainees' perceptions concerning the life skills that remain undeveloped as they pursue studies in their respective teacher education programs

### **Methodology**

This research utilized a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools to explore the perceptions of teacher trainees regarding the extent to which they acquire 21st-century life skills during their academic studies. The study focused on a sample of 100 registered second-year teacher trainees, specifically those enrolled in the Bachelor of Education program at Jamia Millia Islamia University during the 2022/2023 cohorts. The data collection methods included structured questionnaires with closed-ended questions and four focus group discussions designed to capture teacher trainees' perspectives on the 21st-century life skills they believe they developed throughout their academic journey. To ensure comprehensive coverage, the questionnaires were administered by four research assistants, each assigned to specific educational programs and subjects.

### **Discussion and Findings of the Study**

The study's main goal was to find out what teacher candidates thought about the life skills they had developed over their three years of Bachelor of Education courses at Jamia Millia Islamia University. The data shown in

Table 1 relates to the life skills factors that teacher candidates were asked to rate based on how well they felt they were able to acquire these abilities while enrolled in their individual teacher education programmes.

*Table 1 below presents 100 teacher trainees enrolled in the two-year teacher education programs at Jamia Millia Islamia University during 2022/2023 developed in them the relevant 21st-century life Skills*

Relevant 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Life Skill	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Not Sure (%)	Agree(%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Capacity for analysis and synthesis	22.1	6.5	5.2	32.5	37.7
Capacity to adapt to new situations	28.0	6.7	8.0	26.7	30.7
Capacity to learn	28.6		5.2	37.7	28.6
Planning and time management		3.3	8.2	42.6	45.9
Will to Succeed	20.8	2.6	7.8	26.0	42.9
Concern for Quality	26.0	3.9	7.8	33.8	28.6
Ethical Commitment	23.4	2.6	14.3	28.6	31.2
Initiative and entrepreneurial spirit	33.8	6.5	5.2	24.7	29.9
Ability to work autonomously	24.7	6.5	10.4	36.4	22.1
Ability to work in an international context	29.9	6.5	13.0	24.7	26.0
Appreciation of diversity and multi-culturality	29.9	3.9	10.4	26.0	29.9
Capacity to collaborate with a multidisciplinary team	24.7	7.8	7.8	27.3	32.5
Leadership	27.3	2.6	3.9	28.6	37.7
Interpersonal skills	26.0	5.2	5.2	27.3	36.4
Teamwork	25.0	1.3	2.6	17.1	53.9
Decision-making	24.7		9.1	31.2	35.1
Problem solving	23.4	7.8	3.9	26.0	39.0
Capacity for generating new ideas (creativity)	26.3	3.9	2.6	27.6	39.5
Critical and self-critical abilities	27.3	1.3	13.0	36.4	22.1
Proficiency in information management, encompassing the capacity to access and evaluate data from many sources	26.0	1.3	2.6	41.6	28.6
Elementary computing skills	16.4	13.1	9.8	34.4	26.3
Oral and written communication in the official language of instruction	5.1	3.4	5.1	33.9	52.5
Skills in conducting research	22.1	7.8	7.8	24.7	37.7

When surveying participants to evaluate the influence of enrolling in teacher education programs at Jamia Millia Islamia University on the cultivation of pertinent 21st-century skills in teacher trainees, it was observed that planning and time management stood out as a significantly developed life skill, with 88.5% of respondents acknowledging its enhancement. Participants attributed this competency to the diverse array of course units offered by various university departments and faculties. The scheduling overlap among different departments occasionally presented challenges, requiring effective planning to attend lectures from various faculties. Adding to the complexity, these faculties were situated nearly a kilometer apart, demanding swift walking or meticulous time management to ensure punctuality. A History major among the teacher trainees expressed frustration, characterizing the experience of studying Education at the university as arduous due to the challenges of managing conflicting lectures in different locations.

In a related focus group discussion, a participant shared that they learned time management during the second-year school practice. The strict management at the school they practiced in enforced punctuality, with severe consequences for late arrivals. Another participant emphasized the stringent rules at their school practice, where teachers' salaries were deducted for missing lessons without clearance or being five minutes late, as reported by class monitors in observation forms.

Communication abilities were identified as the second-highest skill supported by teacher education programmes, with 86.4% of respondents acknowledging that teacher education methodology enhances the development of critical oral and written communication skills. Focus group participants highlighted a variety of learned communication skills, such as mastery of the official language of instruction, presentation abilities, tactful audience expressions, eloquence, writing ability, public speaking, attentive listening, and organisational skills. In structuring content, clarity in speech, correct pronunciation, and effective public communication. The study revealed that 71% of the participants perceive the development of teamwork skills, attributing it to the organized nature of teacher education pedagogy. They cited examples of engaging in group work assignments within lecture rooms and collaborative study projects that require teamwork, emphasizing the need to fulfill assignments to support their teammates.

Additionally, 62.4% and 70.2% of teacher candidates, respectively, claimed to have acquired research and information management skills. The research abilities mentioned include basic knowledge in research, creating proposals with proficiency, doing research, compiling reports, and acquiring data

during fieldwork excursions. Given that the majority of students pursuing a Bachelor of Arts with Education degree simply study research methods rather than undertaking research in order to meet graduation requirements, this percentage significantly exceeds the average. Theses and other academic research projects are increasingly common in language courses and Bachelor of Science in Education programmes. As a result, teacher candidates' main research project during their studies is gathering information to help them with their schoolwork.

Moreover, participants recognized the cultivation of information management skills, particularly the capability to retrieve and analyze information from diverse sources. This competency was developed through active involvement in writing assignments, delivering presentations in lectures, and preparing lesson notes during their second-year practical experience. Along with research and information management abilities, 70.2% of participants thought they had improved their synthesis and analytical capabilities. They attributed this enhancement to specific university courses, such as Educational Technology, which demanded a meticulous analysis of subject areas for the creation of suitable teaching aids.

Lastly, 68.9% of respondents said that programmes for teacher education had empowered them to cultivate a determination to succeed. This motivation is associated with the aspiration to graduate with a high-class of degree and excel in coursework assignments. Participants attributed the development of this attribute to supportive remarks from fellow teacher candidates and course organisers, highlighting the influence of a lecturer in the second year who emphasized the importance of working hard to be eligible for postgraduate studies or academic positions in public institutions, unification skills, and report writing. To summarize, several life skills were reported to be developed by teacher trainees during their studies in teacher education programs at Jamia Millia University. The majority of participants, 67.1%, believed they developed the capacity for generating new ideas (creativity) through various coursework requirements, such as developing teaching aids in Educational Technology and creative writing assignments in language subjects. Leadership skills, decision-making, and the ability to learn were perceived to be cultivated by 66.3% of participants. They attributed the development of leadership skills to their roles in collaborative projects, coordination of subjects, and involvement in subject-based associations. Concerning proficiency in digital technology, 60.7% of participants believed that their engagement in teacher education programs equipped them with fundamental computing skills. Report-



ed competencies included basics of utilizing software in remote sensing, handling GIS tools like ArcMap and ArcCatalog, typing and submitting coursework through email attachments, and independently or collaboratively creating PowerPoint presentations. Additional life skills factors were included in the self-administered questionnaire, and participants indicated the degree to which they thought they had improved these abilities over their three years of teacher education programmes.

Furthermore, insights from the focus group discussions highlighted additional life skills development. Teacher education programs at Jamia Millia Islamia University were credited with fostering self-esteem and belief among trainees. Participants noted that confidence in the presence of fellow students was cultivated through group discussions and presentations during lectures. Additionally, the programs were acknowledged for contributing to counseling and guidance skills, particularly through coursework in guidance counseling provided by the Department of Educational Psychology.

## **Conclusion**

The results show that the programmes for teacher education at Jamia Millia Islamia University predominantly focus on developing two key sets of life skills: time management and effective communication skills, with ratings of 88.5% and 86.4%, respectively. Additionally, teamwork, information management skills, and the ability for analysis and synthesis are also highlighted, garnering a rating of 70.2%. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity for enhancement in addressing various other essential life skills within the programs.

Areas necessitating increased attention include the cultivation of a determination to succeed, leadership, decision-making, and the aptitude for learning, along with the encouragement of creativity, research proficiency, and digital literacy. Additionally, there is a need to focus on problem-solving, interpersonal skills, commitment to quality, and the capability to collaborate in interdisciplinary teams. Ethical dedication, critical and self-reflective abilities, autonomy, and adaptability to new situations are also identified as crucial aspects requiring heightened emphasis.

## **Implications for Teacher Education**

The results of this study carry various implications for the teacher education programs at Jamia Millia Islamia University on different basis like critical thinking, collaboration, decision-making, and problem-solving

with essential life skills. There is crucial recommendation to emphasize digital literacy among all teachers' trainees rather than following the conventional approach of teaching. In order to implement this, the steps are taken to furnish knowledge of every teacher education program and make them to be literate with the 21st- century development skills.

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# Fostering Life Skills to ordinate Peace Building and Compassion among Pre-Service Teachers

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## Abstract

Each life is unique so the challenges for one as well. To make life worth while it should be filled with such types of action which will be sustainable. It is possible when one is skilled enough to deal with the vicissitudes of life calmly. Life skill is the competency of each living being to survive but the degree of possession might differ, impacting the outcome. Peacefully handling the situation and emerging as a leader is the wish of each one and it can turn out to be a fact with some effort. Life skill gives the edge to meet and greet each challenge with some preparedness. Ordinating the core elements of life skills helps in idiosyncratic the individual. Peace building is a process, not a product. It requires a certain ability to develop social harmony, compassion, and acceptance. Life skill reduces the lacuna in the peace building process. SDG 2030 strongly advocates about "one life one earth". Its mission and vision are to create a world that is a better place to be in. Teachers are the curators of the future and developing life skills among them will certainly help implement peace in society.

*Keywords: Competency, Grit, Life skills, Peace building, Re-motivated, Social harmony*

## Introduction

Teaching is both a science and an art, comparable to a form of meditation. It is a practice aimed at fostering happiness and achievement in learners. The teaching process should be crafted with a deliberate mindset to nurture the upcoming generation for a good cause to save humanity. Complex in nature, teaching is also an act of service to society, carrying with it the immense responsibility of fulfilling the role with integrity. Teachers are the fulcrum of the development of an inclusive learning environment. High-

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ly motivated, dedicated, qualified, proficient, and trained teachers are the prime factors for successfully implementing the curriculum.

Teaching has experienced different facets in the Indian context, from the ancient Vedic period of “Shishya-Guru” relation to the era of AI, where the existence of teachers is sometimes viewed with suspicion and the trending “Home Schooling,” where parents take on a dual role. Each phase has a long story to tell, with many joyful and sad experiences. However, one thing remains common: the journey to become a teacher is important and challenging. This journey equips learners to perform their duties with dignity and ethical practices. Teacher education is the professional program responsible for developing competencies among learners, empowering them to meet the demands and challenges of the profession today.

Education has expanded exponentially with the increased use of technology, artificial intelligence, and the metaverse. Government policies, such as Universalisation of Education, Right to Education (RTE), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), No-detention Policy, Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), and Vocationalisation of Education, are a few major drivers of progress for which there is a need for trained and competent teachers. Post-independence, several committees that provided valuable inputs for incorporating radical change were established.

Many policies were drafted, and position papers were presented for the transformation.

- University Education Commission/Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49)
- Secondary Education Commission (1952-53)
- Kothari Commission (1964-66)
- NPE 1968
- National Commission on Teachers-1 (1983-85)
- NPE 1986
- National Education Policy Review Committee (1990)
- Plan of Action (1992)
- Yashpal Committee (1993)
- NEF 2005
- National Knowledge Commission 2005-08
- NCFTE-2009-10
- NPE 2020
- NCFSE 22-23

All the above-mentioned policies worked in the direction of recognising the role of teacher training and gave the status quo to this fraternity. National Commission on Teacher Education-1 (83-85) beautifully elaborates the thread between teacher and society. It also advocated life skills like communication skills, self-awareness, interpersonal skills, social awareness, with a positive attitude, digital literacy and linguistic ability development in teachers through generic and specific skills through the training of teachers. Even the Yashpal Committee spoke about ‘skill development’ and ‘life long learning’ for better adaptation. Last but not least, NEP 2020 puts forward many policy changes regarding teachers and teacher education and talks about providing more autonomy to teachers. The policy envisages that outstanding faculty with demonstrated leadership and management skills will be identified and trained over time to take on important academic leadership positions. Teachers must become facilitators to ensure the effective participation of students in online and hybrid classroom settings. The NEP 2020 emphasises ‘conceptual understanding rather than rote learning and learning-for-exams’, imbuing life skills of ‘creative and critical thinking to encourage logical decision-making and innovation’, ‘effective communication skills, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience’. Life skills have their due position and are an important part of education. The United Nations has set 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 247 indicators to be achieved by the year 2030. One of them, SDG 4: Quality Education, highlights the need to include life skills in learning so that students gain values and help create a more peaceful and caring society.

## **Objectives**

To develop peace-building and understand its importance among pre-service teachers.

## **Need for this Study**

There is an urgent need to enhance the life skills and peace-building abilities of pre-service teachers to help them manage current classroom challenges. During their internships, many struggle to control classrooms where students often lack discipline. At the same time, teachers face increased roles and expectations. However, many lack sufficient exposure or skills in life skills to handle such situations maturely. As a result, they often find themselves in conflict and struggle to find peace with the challenges they encounter.

## Literature Review

The review of literature explores key themes relevant to the study, focusing on existing research and perspectives that connect peace-building with the development of life skills.

### Peace-building

Khan M.N. et al. (2021), through the research paper “Exploring the effectiveness of peace teachings for Sustainable Development”, argue that peace teachings and teaching techniques for peace need to be assessed for the effectiveness of peace teaching. The selected content about peace should be revisited and revised over time, keeping in view youth contributions to sustainable development. Secondary school teachers were part of this study. Social studies curriculum concerning peace teachings and the classroom and school climate for peace teachings have been analysed through thematic content analysis. Unstructured interviews have been used as a tool of research. The study has been significant in policy development to enhance the effectiveness of peace teachings for sustainable development.

Razavi. T. & Mahmoudi, H. (2022) explored the Bahá’í concept of peace concerning the nature and focus of peace education, especially the role of moral education as an integral element of peace education. It considers the notions of human nobility and the sense of humanity as the compass for holistic peace within a framework of the collective social evolution of humanity. It explores the idea of identifying, understanding, and removing barriers to unity, specifically in the form of inequalities and prejudices, as the foundation of an approach to peace education.

Doyle, M. W., & Sambanis, N. (2000), through the paper titled “International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis”, shared their findings through a survey of twenty-four government and intergovernmental bodies to find their perception towards peacebuilding. Through this study, significant areas of concern were also tagged, and the dimensions of peace building, i.e., post-conflict peace building, stability creation, restoration of state institutions, and addressing the socioeconomic dimensions of conflict, were highlighted.

Rivera-Lozada, I. C., Collazos-Ardila, R., & Rivera-Lozada, O. (2021), studied the topic “Peace-building education, a complex perspective- ‘Student Learning Childhood & Voices,’” and shared their views on designing a formal, special, and flexible educational model for basic secondary school. This model targets adult victims of the armed conflict and former combat-

ants. It aims to foster harmonious relations between communities and nature with a higher goal: peaceful coexistence to support peacebuilding. The approach is centered on a 'Culture of Peace' that helps build sustainable peace within the framework of social justice and rights.

### **Life skills**

The study by Maryam, E., Davoud, M. M., & Zahra, G.(2011) on “Effectiveness of life skills training on increasing self-esteem of high school students” is pseudo-experimental carried out on 160 students. After completing the training program, subjects were administered the Cooper Smith self-esteem questionnaire (58-item version). The findings of the study indicated that life skills training enhanced self-esteem in an experimental group. It is therefore concluded that psycho education and mental health programs, such as life skills training, could increase the necessary skills in students and reduce school and educational problems.

Nasheeda, A., Abdullah, H. B., Krauss, S. E., & Ahmed, N. B. (2018), through the article “A Narrative Systematic Review of Life Skills Education: effectiveness, Research Gaps, and Priorities”, highlighted disparities in life skills education between developed and developing countries. The review showed that developed countries tend to have more structured life skills education programs, which focus on fostering positive behaviour and have documented outcomes for individual young people. In contrast, developing countries have different approaches and research gaps in this area.

Santamaría-Villar et.al. (2021) in the paper ‘Teaching Socio-Emotional Competencies Among Primary School Students: Improving Conflict Resolution and Promoting Democratic Co-existence in Schools’ concluded that early age is the best time to instill life values to create a humanistic approach to better co-existence.

Roh, Y.S. & Kim, S.S. (2015) studied the “Integrating problem-based learning and simulation: Effect on student motivation and life skills” to assess the learners’ motivation and life skills before and after taking a course involving problem-based learning and simulation.

Jacobs, J. M, and Wright, Paul M. (2018), through the research paper, “Transfer of Life Skills in Sport-based Youth Development Programs: A Conceptual Framework Bridging Learning to Application”, discussed that many quality sport-based youth development programs promote life skill acquisition, which can influence physical, behavioural, and cognitive skills.

Overall, the review of literature emphasises that both peacebuilding and life skills are essential components in shaping holistic education. Research on peace building highlights the importance of revisiting peace-related content, integrating moral and cultural dimensions, addressing inequalities, and fostering a culture of peace that extends beyond classrooms to communities and society at large. Studies on life skills underline their role in enhancing self-esteem, motivation, conflict resolution, and socio-emotional competencies, while also pointing to disparities in implementation across different contexts. Together, these findings suggest that peace education and life skills training are mutually reinforcing, equipping teachers and learners with the knowledge, attitudes, and competencies needed to build a more harmonious and sustainable society.

### **Significance of Life Skills**

- Life skills are essential for holistic development, equipping individuals to manage personal and social challenges effectively.
- They represent an ongoing process of cognitive, emotional, and social skill-building, fostering adaptive attitudes and positive behaviours.
- Life skills promote self-awareness, self-acceptance, and respectful, amicable engagement with others.
- Practising life skills cultivates rational decision-making, resilience, and the capacity to recover from setbacks.
- Acquisition of life skills contributes to intrapersonal and interpersonal harmony, enabling individuals to establish peace within themselves and their social environments.

### **Role of Peace-building**

- Peace-building is critical for fostering stability and harmonious coexistence, requiring focused commitment and strategic engagement.
- Successful peace-building involves sustained efforts that address multiple societal dimensions simultaneously.
- The factors contributing to declines in peacefulness differ from those promoting improvements, highlighting the need for solution-oriented approaches.
- Effective peace-building requires a multi-faceted commitment across different societal sectors.
- Lasting peacefulness is achieved by strengthening the Pillars of Positive Peace, which include attitudes, institutions, and structures that prevent and reduce violence.



The development of life skills strengthens the attitudes, behaviours, and competencies necessary for effective peace building, creating a foundation for both personal harmony and broader societal stability.

### **Teachers as Practitioners of the Peace Building Process - Why?**

The classroom is a vital space where minds, beliefs, attitudes, behavior, character, personality, and social harmony can either be nurtured or undermined. It often acts as a complex arena where power dynamics shift—not only between teachers and students but also among students themselves or between students and the wider educational system. Violence in this context is not limited to physical forms such as corporal punishment; it also includes mental and emotional challenges like anxiety, stress, disapproval, disagreement, ignorance, conflict, and bias. Each day in the classroom presents a unique set of experiences, requiring thoughtful engagement from teachers to sustain a positive learning environment.

When teachers are equipped with life skills, they can respond to students' daily challenges with greater accuracy. Such skills help students engage in more mindful activities, build stronger bonds and trust between teachers and students, and support overall development across cognitive, emotional, and social areas. Therefore, life skills serve as a vital foundation for creating a classroom environment that promotes learning and personal growth.

However, in reality, many teachers struggle to cope with stress and often lack sensitivity toward the affective development of students. In many cases, emphasis is placed primarily on cognitive development, leaving emotional and social needs under-addressed. This gap highlights the urgent need for teachers to develop peace-building skills, as these abilities are important for creating a positive and harmonious classroom. Therefore, teachers need to recognise the value of peace-building in their professional practice.

### **Methodology**

This study follows a structured approach to assess the impact of the intervention on pre-service teachers, using a pre-test, treatment, and post-test design with a single group.

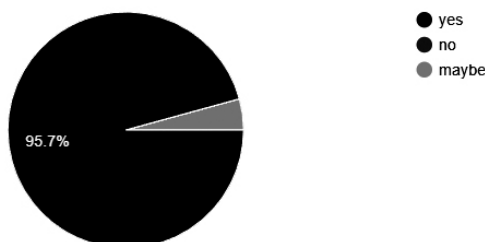
- Pre-test -analysis- treatment; Post test Single group
- Sample size is 47, Pre-service teachers
- Purposive sampling method



### Graph-3: Importance of Life Skills for Teachers

Is lifeskill important for a teacher?

47 responses



#### Research Question- Phase I

The following research questions were created to examine teachers' views on their professional challenges, their responsibilities beyond academic instruction, and the importance of life skills, value-based learning, and peacebuilding in fostering holistic student development.

- 1) Being a teacher, do you face any challenges beyond the students' cognitive domain?

Most respondents (96%) agreed that they encounter challenges related to discipline, low confidence levels, and a lack of appropriate attitudes and empathy, which often dominate classroom interactions.

- 2) Do you think that a teacher's job is only to teach?

Approximately 79% of respondents believed that a teacher's role extends beyond academics, encompassing the development of other skills and abilities. Sixteen per cent felt that time constraints and academic pressures make it difficult to focus on non-academic aspects, while 5% were unwilling to participate in this discussion.

- 3) Do you get disturbed by students' behavioural or attitudinal issues?

Most teachers admitted that such issues affect them; however, a few noted that these behaviours are characteristic of Gen Z students and suggested that sometimes ignoring them is the most practical approach.

- 4) What strategies do you use to support your students' well-being?

Teachers who focus on holistic development reported using methods

such as empathetic listening, assertive behaviour training, mindfulness activities, and regular discussions with students.

- 5) How can awareness be created among students regarding sustainability, global brotherhood, and social harmony?

Respondents highlighted the use of case studies, role play, discussion methods, movie clips, and TED talks as effective ways to develop 21st-century skills and promote social awareness.

- 6) “Value-based learning is much needed.” Justify your response.

Almost all participants agreed, noting that Panchatantra stories and mythology-based content from serials such as Chanakya, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Tipu Sultan, and The Great Shivaji help inculcate good values and positive qualities in students.

- 7) By integrating life skills among students, peace-building can be achieved. What is your perspective?

Most teachers agreed in principle but expressed uncertainty about the practical implementation, indicating a need for further guidance and training on integrating life skills for peace-building.

Overall, the qualitative analysis indicates that pre-service teachers are aware of the importance of peace-building and life skills, recognise the challenges students face beyond academics, and perceive a need for strategies that support holistic development and value-based learning.

### **Treatment Phase**

The treatment phase was designed to address the research questions in Phase II by implementing targeted interventions aimed at enhancing pre-service teachers’ empathy, self-awareness, critical thinking, and reflective practices. This phase was conducted in four stages.

**Stage- 1** focused on empathy-building through activities such as case studies, games, puzzles, and a “Give Yourself a Break” session.

**Stage-2** involved developing self-awareness and critical thinking through three workshops of two hours each, complemented by movie screenings followed by discussions.

**Stage-3** consisted of simulated classroom sessions to provide practical application of the skills learned.

**Stage-4** incorporated reflection and feedback sessions, allowing partici-

pants to consolidate their learning and provide insights on the effectiveness of the interventions.

Overall, this treatment phase provided a structured and experiential approach to equipping pre-service teachers with the competencies necessary to foster peace-building and life skills in their future classrooms, forming the basis for the analysis of Phase II research questions.

### **Research Question-PhaseII**

Phase II of the study explored pre-service teachers' understanding of life skills, their readiness for peace building, and the effectiveness of the intervention sessions.

#### **Q1. Understanding the importance of life skills in the present educational context**

Most teachers acknowledged that life skills are important and reported increased sensitivity toward their students. Some felt life skills should also be developed by parents. A few noted that social media has negatively impacted students' childhood and innocence.

#### **Q2. Readiness to deal with students for peace-building**

Teachers expressed commitment to remaining patient, listening actively, and supporting students in maintaining peace. Many emphasised the importance of not losing hope easily while handling challenges.

#### **Q3. Effectiveness of peace-building sessions through life skills training**

All participants agreed that the sessions were helpful and expressed satisfaction in attending them.

These findings indicate that structured life skills training can positively influence teachers' attitudes, readiness, and strategies for fostering peace and holistic development among students.

### **Conclusion**

The study shows that many pre-service teachers have limited sensitivity to the affective domain of students, mainly concentrating on content delivery. This may be because of their lack of exposure to value-based education or the capability approach during their own training. As a result, although they are confident in teaching subject matter, they often neglect the emotional, social, and moral development of learners.

After completing three workshops of three hours each, noticeable changes in the attitudes of pre-service teachers were observed. Individual counselling sessions were provided as needed, which helped the participants become more grounded and gain a clearer understanding of the importance of peace-building in their professional roles. Their interactions with peers improved, demonstrating that positive change is achievable through well-structured interventions. The program fostered a democratic classroom environment and strengthened the teachers' self-concept, while the integration of life skills enhanced their overall capabilities, including empathy, critical thinking, and reflective practices. This experience highlights that targeted interventions can effectively support the holistic development of pre-service teachers and prepare them to promote peace and collaborative learning in their future classrooms.

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## Enhancing Emotional Intelligence and Life Skills through Psychological Counselling Approaches Among University Students

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### Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of combining counseling techniques to enhance emotional intelligence (EI) and life skills (LS) among university students (US). Over two years, ten randomly selected participants attended regular counseling sessions aimed at addressing emotional, personal, and social challenges commonly faced in academic life. The primary goal was to assess how different counseling methods affected participants' EI and LS. A unique assessment approach was used, requiring participants to record personal reflections before and after each session. This method allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of the techniques' effectiveness. Counseling sessions included techniques such as relaxation, mindfulness, expressive writing, rational emotive therapy, and logotherapy, chosen to boost EI and life skills. Participants' progress was measured through self-reflections and counsellor observations.

Participants initially struggled with low self-esteem, stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and difficulties in managing relationships and emotions. Following the intervention, they reported greater self-awareness, confidence, emotional regulation, improved decision-making, stronger relationships, stress resilience, and signs of personal growth, including increased independence and positive behavioural changes. This study demonstrates the positive impact of integrating diverse counseling techniques in enhancing EI and strengthening LS among university students. The results highlight the value of a multifaceted counseling approach in promoting holistic development and supporting students' well-being amid academic, emotional, and social challenges.

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*Keywords: Psychological counselling, university students, emotional intelligence, life skills, wellbeing*

## **Introduction**

The prevalence of psychological distress among undergraduates, as compared to the general population, underscores the critical concern surrounding mental health in university settings (Kuruppuarachchi et al., 2002). Notably, male undergraduates exhibit higher distress levels than their counterparts within the community, emphasising the pronounced disparity in mental health concerns (Kuruppuarachchi et al., 2002). This escalating prevalence of mental health difficulties among university students constitutes a pressing issue for both educational institutions and their broader communities (Baik et al., 2019). A significant proportion of undergraduate nursing students grapple with depression, anxiety, and stress, with intimate correlations existing among these psychological variables (Rathnayake & Ekanayaka, 2016). Such distress is closely interlinked with self-rated physical and mental health, underscoring the imperative need for initiatives aimed at enhancing mental well-being among this student cohort (Rathnayake & Ekanayaka, 2016). The transitional phase into university life poses vulnerabilities for students, especially concerning the impact of social media on mental health. Research indicates that curating an altered self-image online during this transition can potentially exacerbate mental health challenges, particularly manifesting as heightened loneliness (Thomas, Orme, & Kerrigan, 2020).

Psychological counselling is a collaborative and purposeful effort aimed at addressing personal, social, and psychological issues to enhance overall well-being (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2018). Based on theoretical knowledge and empirical research, counselling psychology provides interventions across various life areas to empower individuals, families, and communities (Stanley, 2013). Seen as a purposeful and private dialogue, counselling encourages reflection and resolution of life challenges, acting as a pathway for positive change and self-awareness (McLeod, 2013). A key concept in this approach is emotional intelligence (EI), which refers to the ability to understand and manage emotions within oneself and others, playing a crucial role in shaping behavior and relationships (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Although EI remains vital for developing life skills, its definition and measurement are still debated. Studies show that while EI has limited correlation with academic success, it is strongly linked to higher life satisfaction, better problem-solving and coping skills, and lower anxiety (Bastian, Burns, & Nettelbeck, 2005).

## Methodology

This study adopted a multifaceted approach utilising diverse counselling techniques to address individual emotional challenges among university students seeking counselling services over the last two years. The treatment plans incorporated a range of interventions, including expressive writing, mindful walking, mindfulness exercises, relaxation techniques, cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), rational emotive therapy (RET), logo therapy, and communication skill development. These methodologies were strategically selected to target various dimensions of emotional well-being and life skill enhancement.

The effectiveness of expressive writing as a cost-effective intervention was analysed, revealing its utility in enhancing happiness and life satisfaction among students (Cayubit, 2017). Further, research findings indicated that writing about traumatic or emotional events led to short-term distress followed by long-term improvements in physical and psychological health outcomes (Baikie & Wilhelm, 2005). Additionally, participants engaged in a mindful walking program demonstrated reduced psychological stress symptoms and improved quality of life (Teut et al., 2013). Similarly, mindfulness-based interventions were observed to decrease stress and anxiety levels while enhancing overall mental health among college students (Cicuto & Demarzo, 2022). Moreover, the counselling sessions implemented general techniques and skills such as establishing confidentiality, therapeutic relationship, unconditional positive regard, active listening, and empathy, which are essential for effective counselling outcomes.

To evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions, a random selection of ten students (six females and four males) participated. This sample included five students from Applied Science, two from Allied Health Sciences, with one student each from the Medical Faculty, Urban Aquatic and Bio Resources Faculty, and Management Faculty. Each student was assigned a specific counselling technique and assessed themselves before and after the counselling sessions. Their documented personal reflections encompassed testimonials, pre- and post-evaluations, and comparison charts outlining their observed changes.

The data collected from these interventions, pre- and post-assessments, along with counsellors' observations, established research findings, contribute to the understanding of the efficacy of diverse counselling methodologies in enhancing emotional intelligence and life skills among university students. This comprehensive approach aimed to address the individual

needs of students across different faculties and genders, offering insights into effective counselling strategies for fostering emotional well-being and skill development in higher education settings.

## **Results**

The research findings of the individual case studies highlight the transformative impact of counselling interventions on university students' emotional intelligence and life skill development. It is impressive to see the diversity of techniques employed and the positive outcomes reported by these clients. Overall, the counselling sessions resulted in diverse positive outcomes, including improved emotional well-being, academic success, enhanced coping mechanisms, and better interpersonal relationships, showcasing the efficacy of tailored counselling approaches.

### **Client A – (23y, Female, Allied Health Sciences)**

A remarkable journey of transforming her negative self-image to a positive and fulfilling life through a combination of relaxation techniques, mindfulness practices, and behaviour modifications, she exhibited a significant shift in her self-perception. From a state of self-loathing and inadequacy, she transitioned to self-love and acceptance. This transformation was accompanied by improved academic performance, financial independence, and the pursuit of ambitious goals.

### **Client B – (24y, Male, Applied Sciences)**

Engaging in expressive writing, relaxation techniques, and clay therapy significantly reduced Client B's anxiety and depressive symptoms. These interventions helped him understand his emotions better, opening the door for emotional healing and self-discovery.

### **Client C – (22y, Female, Applied Science)**

The use of expressive writing and mindfulness techniques empowered her to overcome past disappointments and build resilience. She reported notable improvements and progress, moving from avoiding people to engaging in interactions and excelling in academics and interpersonal relationships.

### **Client D – (23y, Male, Allied Health Science)**

Daily engagement in mindfulness practices and expressive writing sessions helped him navigate a challenging phase in life. He demonstrated increased self-awareness, adaptive thinking, and significant personal and academic growth, transforming from a difficult period to becoming a final-

ist for an employability skills award.

**Client E – (24y, Female, Management Faculty)**

Her use of mindful walking and breathing exercises helped her overcome workplace harassment, fight bullying, build resilience, and attain mental stability through these practices. These methods allowed her to recover quickly from emotional distress, strengthening her coping strategies.

**Client F – (24y, Male, Applied Science)**

His struggle with focus and health issues significantly improved through mindfulness practices and dietary adjustments, which led to an alleviation of physical discomforts and an enhancement in concentration and mental tranquillity; this helped him face the exams successfully.

**Client G – Senara (24y, Female, Urban & Aquatic Bio Resources)**

Through journaling and mindfulness practices, she embarked on a journey of self-discovery, addressing suppressed emotions and reinforcing self-worth.

**Client H – (27y, Male, Applied Science)**

Expressive writing and mindful walking played a pivotal role in his journey from anger and resentment to understanding and releasing negativity, enabling him to engage in self-reflection, foster friendships, and manage emotions effectively.

**Client I – (25y, Female, Applied Science)**

By practicing relaxation techniques and expressive writing, she improved her communication skills and gained a wider view of challenges, which enhanced her ability to solve problems.

**Client J – (25y, Female, Medical Faculty)**

Mind-relaxing exercises and expressive writing empowered her to address relationship issues constructively and achieve success in communicating effectively, enhancing concentration and decision-making skills.

Self-reflection of clients - before and after counselling- clients'perspective			
Client	Before counselling	Utilized techniques	After counselling- from their perspective
Client A –23y fe- male- 3rd yr - Allied Health Sciences	<p>“I have had depression symptoms several times in my life, and for the first time, I got it when I was studying Advanced Level. I was a person with a negative mindset since my childhood. I was so worried and always had a ‘not enough’ mindset, even though I got excellent marks for my exams, and I had thoughts that I was an ‘Ugly person’.</p> <p>I did not want even to get a photo with friends, and I did not like to see myself in a mirror since I was ugly. Most of the nights I cried a lot lying on my bed, feeling that I was an ugly one, but nobody had told me like that, but a reason might be my sister got praises as she is fair and beautiful.”</p> <p>“I had extreme exam fears, though no matter how much I had studied, sometimes I did not want to write the exams. I could not bear such minor changes in words or behaviour from my parents and friends. There was no such feeling of happiness in my life.”</p> <p>“I was stressed due to the financial issues in my family, and I was struggling with the tuition classes I did for younger students.”</p> <p>“Though I wanted to, I was afraid of publishing a book on Chemistry for A/L students as Professors publish these books”.</p>	<p>Relaxation techniques, Mindful walking, and Mindful jogging, CBT, RET, Logo therapy, Behaviour modifications with new lifestyle patterns, with healthy eating patterns at the university hostel</p>	<p>“The Best decision I ever made in my life is to meet a University Psychological Counsellor”.</p> <p>I started to heal. I changed my lifestyle to get up at 5 am and start the day with the following relaxation techniques, then go for a walk mindfully. After a few days, I joined the gym.</p> <p>I feel so relaxed and happy, I started to love myself, I love to see myself in the mirror now.”</p> <p>“I got an A or B+ for all subjects and achieved a higher GPA.”</p> <p>“I can manage all my tuition classes and continue all successfully with my university studies.”</p> <p>“I became a financially independent person and successfully help my family too now.”</p> <p>“I continue to work on publishing my book, and I have the target to achieve it by January 2024.”</p> <p>“I am aware of the jealousy and ego emotions that come to me.”</p> <p>“Now I love to live and am grateful for my life always.”</p> <p>“I understand the worth of my life and how beautiful it is. Every day I have a nice plan to live and spend the day relaxing and happily achieving my targets and goals.”</p>

Client B – 24y - 2nd year Male Student- Applied Science	Relationship break-up, Anxiety and suffering from depressive symptoms and OCD symptoms, unable to do daily schedules,	“Write the whole problem as I felt”, Relaxation tech- niques, Bhramari yoga techniques, Mindful practi- ces- Being in the present moment, Clay Therapy	<p>“From the very first day, I felt massive relief after the session. I was helped to understand the situation I was in and the reasons for such feelings. I continued going there for several months, which really helped me over- come my problems.</p> <p>‘Writing the whole problem as I felt’ after doing it several times, it gave me results. I kept doing it for several months, and it really helped me not to feel the same way about my problem. Day by day, writing about my problem helped me to see it in a way that I did not see earlier”.</p> <p>“The Clay therapy helped me a lot to remove the feelings of fear and anxiety about things I did not like. I was taught the “Bhramari yoga” practice, and I used it to have a quick relief from sudden depressing feelings. It provided results immediately after 6-10 repetitions, which helped reduce my stress level and calm me down quickly. Being in the pres- ent moment sometimes helped me to get over some bad days.</p> <p>The best thing was that I could analyse myself, why I felt such things, and my behaviours and actions. I felt like going to counselling was shameful, and after 2-3 sessions, I understood that counselling is not something to be ashamed of, or it is not something to go to only when we are in a problem. Counselling is an excellent way of understand- ing how life works, how others think and how to enjoy life even in rough times. I learned how thoughts are generated, why those thoughts are generated, and what the reality of myself is”.</p>
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<p>Client C – 22year Female – 1styear, – Applied Science Faculty</p>	<p>Relationship break-up, unable to face friends. “I do not want to be in that combination, even to take a photo. How can I click a photo with the unpleasant people around me?” That is what I felt. That is what I thought before. I cannot handle a problem well. I had zero per cent emotional intelligence. I felt regret and disappointment about myself. I got some low results in my first year”.</p>	<p>Expressive writing Relaxation techniques Being in the present moment</p>	<p>“After the last session, I faced everyone in my combination. I talked with everyone in combination. I feel so good. The disappointment of my life has gone. I want to live a beautiful life. I learned so many things. ‘Accept the uncertainty’ is the best message. I always try to apply it to myself. Also, I practised well to not gossip with anyone”. “Now I am entirely cured. I can be with anyone that I used to hate and click a photograph as well. Also, if someone asks for help, I am always there for them. Now I know how to handle things and make sure to ask when someone tells me something. I balanced my studies so well in my second year. I got selected for two specials”.</p>
<p>Client D – 23year- Male- 1st year student- Allied Health Science Faculty</p>	<p>“The relationship that lasted for a few years was broken down. Got seriously ill, physically and mentally ill, unable to participate in university studies, losing appetite, sleeping disturbance, came for counselling to settle the relationship again. A narrow attitude towards girls, the partner’s likes, and dislikes. Anger personality”</p>	<p>Daily Mindful walking, Daily expressive writing, Follow the breathing and mindful relaxation techniques, engage in desired activities-(swimming)</p>	<p>“By now, I am a third-year student. Counselling sessions enable me to pass through a rough and dull time. Over time, I was able to jump into recovery. Got Self-aware about the weakness, got a broad thinking capacity, managing skills in hectic schedules, and the ability to understand aggressive communication and violent behaviours. Changed life story to a new path, selected as one of the top three finalists for the faculty’s employability skills award. I was also able to win many victories for the university in inter-university competitions. Counselling was a great help and blessed with the life story to change an optimistic orientation”.</p>

<p>Client E- - 24year Female - Post graduate student – Man- agement faculty</p>	<p>“I endured a turbulent experience and a persistent cycle of bullying, neglect, threats, and mental harassment from a supervisor, which significantly impacted my mental well-being, resulting in the manifestation of severe anxiety and depression.”</p>	<p>“Recommendation was to engage in mindful walks and breathing, and initiate a practice of journaling.”</p>	<p>“With the continued support of counselling and the implementation of these methodologies, I am happy to say that I have hence developed better resilience and self-possession.”</p> <p>“On difficult days, I would try to engage in mindful walking or practice deep breathing whenever possible, and I found solace in these activities. As a result, my days have become noticeably more manageable because of them.”</p> <p>“After practising these methods for almost a month, I am very pleased with the outcome. Previously, recovering from a problem of this magnitude would have taken a considerable amount of time. It brings me immense joy to note that this time, I managed to bounce back within two days. Discussing this situation no longer triggers anxiety or discomfort, which I am deeply grateful for.”</p>
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<p>Client F – 24year male, 2nd year Applied Science-</p>	<p>I found it extremely challenging to concentrate on any task at hand. I was plagued by a persistent headache and an uncomfortable gastric condition, which further exacerbated my inability to focus. Additionally, my eyesight seemed to blur intermittently.</p>	<p>Mindful attention to the subtle sensations of my feet striking the ground as I walk. gently instructed me to cultivate a deep awareness of my breath</p>	<p>“This simple yet profound practice anchored me to the present moment, effectively grounding me amidst the turbulence of my thoughts.</p> <p>A practice that proved immensely beneficial in calming my mind’s incessant chatter. As I focused on the rhythmic rise and fall of my chest, a sense of tranquillity washed over me, alleviating the anxiety that had been clouding my thoughts”.</p> <p>“I embarked on a journey towards greater mindfulness, discovering the power of focusing on the present moment to enhance attention and cultivate inner peace. I diligently adhered to the dietary modifications prescribed by my doctor and maintained my meditation practice. This combination of dietary adjustments and mindfulness exercises proved to be remarkably effective in alleviating my gastric discomfort and enhancing my attention span. Within a few days, the lingering headache that had plagued me for far too long was miraculously resolved”.</p>
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Client G- 24year Female- 2nd year, Faculty of Urban & Aquatic Bio Re- sources	<p>“I was usually hopeless and confused about my life and decisions. I could not identify my pattern and what was wrong with me. I felt helpless and isolated. I often struggled with decision-making and self-prioritising. I thought these anxiety or depression symptoms only happened to me, and I was always suppressing my feelings and thoughts. I did not make life goals. I did not know what to do with my current situation. I did not value myself, my thoughts and always suppressed my feelings. I did not try to get adequate help”</p>	<p>Journaling, goal map writing, mindful walking.</p>	<p>“I trained my mind to prioritise myself and make boundaries. I think I have made progress, even though it is not super good yet. I practised writing my goals as a goal map. I journaled for more than three weeks and felt relaxed. I identified my conditions, what happened and about childhood emotional neglect and parenting issues.</p> <p>Now I have made progress in overcoming the suppression of my feelings. I prioritise and value myself considerably more than before. I am trying to improve myself even a little by little.” “I have learned about my health conditions and theirsymptoms.”</p> <p>“My Developments - Decision making, Asking for help, Prioritising self, Identifying thoughts, Searching to recover, learning from mistakes, trying to improve oneself.”</p>
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Client H – 27-year-old Male- Post-graduate student- Applied Science Faculty.	Refused by ex-crush, Anger, and revenge when seen ex-crush and friends, always felt like ignoring and remembering the incident, felt self as unlucky, Depressive feelings and Anxiety, Disgusting feelings to see or stay around ex-crush.	Relaxation, practising assertive communication and changing reactions to responses, Expressive writing, mindful walking, engaging in activities-cooking with friends,	“Reduced the affected communications, Ability to make friendships, some became good friends. After writing for 66 days, I felt like I was repeating the same thoughts. However, through writing and reading, I noticed a reduction in sadness and anger. Over time, my anger towards past incidents and people dissipated, as if it had been erased. I have also become more aware of my negative thoughts. Relaxed while doing mindful walking, enjoyed the cooking with friends and relaxed a lot. Ability to understand my attitude regarding ‘others should behave as I wanted’; ability to understand my ego helped me to release from disgusting feelings.
Client I –25year, Female-4th year, Applied Science Faculty	“Get very stressed during exams and when any challenge occurs.” “Get discouraged when things become hard”. “Get angry when stressed”.	Breathing and Relaxation techniques, Expressive writing, Communication strategies,	“Patiently take the challenges one at a time. Follow up on a to-do list and stick to a practical to-do list. Look at things with the perception ‘what are the skills I can improve here’. Have more control over that. Breathing techniques that help to calm myself. Improved my ability to communicate boundaries effectively. Always get new strategies to look at things. Sessions help to look at the problems or challenges in a broader way with several perspectives. After a session, one feels relaxed and relieved”.

Client J –25year female- 4th year -Medical Faculty	“I was struggling with my relationship problem for a few days. I was anxious and could not think of what I should do regarding this. I was afraid that my studies would be affected by this”.	“One is writing the things in my mind on paper, and the other is doing a mind-re-laxing exercise.” “I wrote things in my mind on the paper, and on a later date I read them.”	“I felt really relaxed after talking with you. I saw some aspects of life which I could not see with my eyes because of your help.”  “I did these exercises, because I could figure out what questions I should ask my boyfriend over time. Otherwise, there were lots in my mind, and I was struggling with what to ask and what not to. So, I explained to him what was on my mind, and he thanked me for expressing myself to him without pretending. After that, things went smoothly, and I was happy about my decision and was thankful to you, Madam.” “It is because of the mind exercise that I could improve my concentration abilities.”
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## Discussion

The narratives shared by the clients offer valuable insights into how counselling transforms individuals with diverse concerns and backgrounds. The experiences they report highlight the effectiveness of various counselling techniques in addressing their existing challenges and encouraging positive changes in their lives. The discussion below examines common themes and patterns seen across the clients’ accounts, emphasizing the importance of self-reflection and counselling interventions.

## Identification and Acknowledgement of Issues

Clients from various faculties and backgrounds shared common challenges like relationship issues, academic stress, and emotional struggles. The first step in their transformative journey was to acknowledge and identify these issues.

## Utilization of Counseling Techniques

The clients’ narratives demonstrate various counselling techniques used to address their concerns. Techniques such as relaxation exercises, expressive writing, mindfulness practices, and assertive communication played key roles in their counselling experiences.

## **Positive Outcomes and Personal Growth**

A recurring theme in the clients' post-counselling perspectives is the positive effect on their mental well-being. Several clients reported enhanced self-esteem, better stress management, and improved coping skills. Developing a positive mindset and resilience when facing challenges were expected outcomes.

## **Empowerment and Self-Discovery**

The accounts indicate that counselling promoted a process of self-discovery and empowerment. Clients gained increased awareness of their emotions, thoughts, and behavioral patterns. This new awareness enabled them to make positive changes in their lives.

## **Academic and Professional Achievements**

Several clients reported improved academic performance and successful achievement of personal and professional goals after counseling. Mental well-being positively correlates with academic and professional success.

## **Shift in Perspective on Counselling**

Initially, some clients hesitated to seek counselling, but their perceptions changed as they attended the sessions. Their counselling shifted from being a last resort in a crisis to a helpful tool for personal growth and understanding.

## **Application of Learned Strategies**

The clients demonstrated how they applied the strategies learned during counselling in their daily lives. From mindful practices to journaling, these techniques became essential parts of their coping tools, helping them manage stress and emotional difficulties.

## **Time Frame for Positive Changes**

Positive changes in clients varied in duration. Some experienced immediate relief, while others noticed gradual improvements over time. The nature and complexity of individual challenges impact the effectiveness of counselling interventions.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the varied experiences shared by clients highlight the multifaceted nature of counselling and its potential to create positive changes in people's lives. Using different therapeutic techniques tailored to individual

needs is essential for encouraging self-reflection, resilience, and personal growth. This discussion enhances the ongoing understanding of counselling's impact from clients' perspectives and underscores its role in supporting overall well-being.

## **Recommendation**

This research highlights the powerful impact of multifaceted counselling techniques on emotional intelligence and life skills among university students. It emphasizes the crucial role of psychological counselling in addressing emotional distress and promoting comprehensive personal development in higher education. Going forward, it is advisable to further incorporate tailored counseling strategies to provide ongoing support for students' overall well-being. Focusing on personalized approaches will strengthen the positive effects of counseling interventions in university environments.

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