
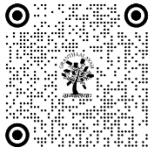


INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE SKILLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i4.2024.6074](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i4.2024.6074)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between Life Skills and the School Environment plays a crucial role in shaping secondary school students' overall development. Understanding how different aspects of the school environment impact students' life skills can provide valuable insights for enhancing educational practices. This study investigates this relationship to identify how variations in school environments influence students' life skills. This study explored the relationship between Life Skills and the School Environment among secondary school students in Hassan district, Karnataka. Using a descriptive survey method, data from 108 students across six schools were analyzed employing mean, standard deviation, correlation, and independent 't' tests, with significance set at 0.05 and 0.01 level. Results revealed a significant positive correlation between Life Skills and the School Environment. Students in better school environments demonstrated higher life skills compared to those in moderate and low environments. These findings suggest that enhancing the school environment could be crucial for developing students' life skills. Educators and policymakers might consider investing in improving school conditions to foster better life skills among students. Future studies could explore specific elements of the school environment that most strongly impact life skills. Expanding the research to include a larger, state-wide sample could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how changes in the school environment over time influence students' life skills development. Such an approach would offer broader insights into the effectiveness of various environmental factors and their impact on life skills across diverse educational settings.

Keywords: Relationship, Life Skills, School Environment, Secondary School Students



1. INTRODUCTION

The school environment plays a crucial role in fostering life skills in secondary education students. A supportive and inclusive school environment can help students develop essential life skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration. When students feel safe, respected, and encouraged, they are more likely to take risks, ask questions, and explore their interests, leading to a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Through education, secondary schools can intentionally teach life skills such as time management, self-awareness, and self-regulation, which are essential for academic success and beyond. Schools can also provide opportunities for students to practice life skills through extracurricular activities, project-based learning, and community service. By integrating life skills into the curriculum and school culture, secondary schools can empower students to become confident, capable, and compassionate individuals who are prepared to succeed in all aspects of life.

Moreover, a positive school environment can also promote social and emotional learning (SEL), which is critical for students' overall well-being and academic achievement. SEL helps students develop self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills, all of which are essential life skills. By prioritizing school environment and life skills education, secondary schools can provide students with a strong foundation for success in school and beyond.

Life Skills:

Life skills are essential abilities that enable individuals to navigate everyday challenges, make informed decisions, and achieve their goals. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 1999), life skills are "the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life." These skills are crucial for students at the secondary education level, as they prepare to transition into adulthood and face various challenges in their personal and professional lives.

Academic performance is significantly enhanced when students possess strong life skills. Research has shown that students who develop life skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication tend to perform better academically (Durlak et al., 2011). Moreover, life skills promote social and emotional learning (SEL), which is critical for students to develop healthy relationships, manage stress, and make informed decisions (Weare & Gray, 2003).

In addition to academic benefits, life skills play a vital role in career development and employability. Employers seek individuals who possess strong communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills, among others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). By developing these skills, students can increase their chances of success in the workforce. Furthermore, life skills such as time management, self-awareness, and self-regulation are essential for independent living and overall well-being (Kumar, 2017).

However, life skills are vital for students at the secondary education level. They enhance academic performance, promote social and emotional learning, develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, foster effective communication and collaboration, support career development and employability, encourage healthy habits and well-being, and prepare students for independent living. By prioritizing life skills education, educators can empower students to succeed in all aspects of life.

School Environment:

The school environment in India plays a vital role in shaping the learning outcomes and overall development of students. According to Kumar (2017), the school environment encompasses various physical, social, and psychological factors that influence student learning and growth. A study by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA, 2014) highlights the significance of school environment in promoting student motivation, engagement, and academic achievement.

In the Indian context, the school environment is shaped by cultural and societal factors, such as the emphasis on discipline and respect for authority (Srivastava, 2013). Moreover, the school environment in India is often characterized by diversity and inclusivity, with students from varied socio-economic backgrounds and abilities (NCERT, 2005). A supportive school environment can help address these diversities and promote equity and inclusion (Azim Premji Foundation, 2017).

Research has shown that a positive school environment can have a significant impact on student well-being and mental health (Mishra, 2019). A study by the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA, 2018) found that schools with a supportive environment and positive teacher-student relationships tend to have students with better mental health and well-being.

Overall, the school environment in India is a critical factor that influences student learning, growth, and development. By prioritizing school environment, Indian schools can create a nurturing and supportive ecosystem that enables students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

1.1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND LIFE SKILLS

The relationship between life skills and school environment has gained significant attention globally, including in India, as research has shown that both factors play a crucial role in shaping the academic, social, and emotional development of secondary school students (Ecclestone, 2007; Hattie, 2009). Life skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and time management, are essential for students to succeed in school and beyond (World Health

Organization, 1999). In the Indian context, life skills have been recognized as a critical component of education, with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 emphasizing the need to develop life skills among students (NCERT, 2005).

Studies in India have also highlighted the importance of school environment in promoting life skills and academic achievement. For example, a study by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) found that schools with a supportive environment and positive teacher-student relationships tend to have students with better life skills and academic performance (NUEPA, 2014). Another study by the Azim Premji Foundation found that schools that fostered a culture of critical thinking and problem-solving tended to have students with better life skills and academic achievement (Azim Premji Foundation, 2017).

Despite the established importance of both life skills and school environment, few studies have explored the relationship between the two in the Indian context. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the relationship between life skills and school environment among secondary school students in India.

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

The need for the study on the relationship between life skills and school environment of secondary school students arises from the growing recognition of the importance of life skills in achieving academic success and overall well-being. In India, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 emphasizes the need to develop life skills among students to prepare them for the challenges of the 21st century (NCERT, 2005). Moreover, research has shown that school environment plays a significant role in shaping students' life skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication (Kumar, 2017).

The importance of the study lies in its potential to provide insights into the relationship between life skills and school environment, which can inform educational policies and practices aimed at promoting students' overall development. In India, where secondary education is a critical phase of schooling, understanding the factors that influence students' life skills can help educators and policymakers design effective interventions to support students' academic and personal growth (NUEPA, 2014). Furthermore, the study's findings can contribute to the development of evidence-based strategies for creating a supportive school environment that fosters the development of essential life skills among secondary school students.

3. LITERATURE CITED

The present study aims to investigate the relationship between life skills and school environment among secondary school students. Life skills are essential for students to succeed in academics and beyond. Research has shown that school environment plays a significant role in shaping students' life skills. This review of related literature examines recent studies on life skills among adolescents and secondary school students in India.

Eljo et al. (2023) found that the majority of respondents had a low level of overall life skill, which improved after intervention. Wahlang et al. (2022) observed that most adolescents in Child Care Institutions possessed a low level of life skill, with significant differences between male and female respondents. Sudha and Mythili (2022) found that most high school adolescents had average life skills, with a significant difference in life skills based on the medium of instruction. Raju and Rao (2022) evaluated the critical analysis of life skills among secondary school pupils and found that most pupils had an average level of life skills. Meenu & Rani (2021) observed significant gender differences in cognitive and interpersonal dimensions of life skills among secondary school students.

3.1. OVERVIEW OF STUDIES AND RESEARCH GAP

The reviewed studies highlight the significance of life skills among adolescents and secondary school students in India. While some studies focused on the level of life skills, others examined the impact of interventions or demographic factors on life skills. However, there is a research gap in understanding the relationship between life skills and school environment. The present study aims to address this gap by exploring how school environment influences life skills among secondary school students. By examining this relationship, the study can provide insights into creating a supportive school environment that fosters the development of essential life skills among students.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The research dilemma identified for the current investigation is: "Influence of School Environment on the development of Life Skills in Secondary School Students"

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- 1) To examine the relationship between Life Skills and School Environment among secondary school students.
- 2) To evaluate the Life Skills among secondary school students having low, moderate and high levels of school environment.
- 3) To examine the differences in the Life Skills between secondary school boys and girls.

6. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Following are the research hypotheses for the present study:

- 1) There is no significant relationship between Life Skills and School Environment of secondary school students.
- 2) There is no significant difference in the Life Skills among secondary school students having low, moderate and high levels of school environment.
- 3) There is no significant difference in the Life Skills between secondary school boys and girls.

7. METHOD USED

Population: The population is consisting of secondary school students studying in Hassan District, Karnataka, India.

Sample Size: A sample of 108 secondary school students studying in six schools followed by Karnataka State Syllabus would be drawn using simple random sampling technique. Data representation would be given to secondary school boys and girls. Giving representation of all type of schools, a sample of 108 secondary school students were randomly selected from six schools in Mandya district of Karnataka.

Tools of the Study: To study about the Life Skills and School Environment of the secondary school students the researcher has used two Indexes namely, Life Skill Assessment Scale developed by A. Radhakrishnan Nair (2011) and School Environment Scale developed by the researcher (2024).

Collection of Data: The data was collected by the researcher herself by personally visiting the schools and administered the selected tools for secondary school students under normal conditions. The researcher has been told to respond to the items freely and frankly. The secondary school students included in the sample were told to furnish the details required from them along with personal proforma

8. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Table-1: Correlation between Life Skills and School Environment among Secondary School Students.

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Obtained 'r' value	Level. of Sig.
Life Skills and	279.777	58.309	0.356	**
School Environment	250.824	71.083		

**Significant at 0.01 level is 0.254 [N=108; df=106]

Table 1 presents the mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficient ('r' value) for Life Skills and School Environment scores among secondary school students. The results show a significant positive correlation between Life Skills and School Environment ($r = 0.356$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that students with better school environments tend to have higher life skills, and vice versa.

The obtained 'r' value (0.356) exceeds the table value (0.254) at the 0.01 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Instead, the alternative hypothesis is accepted, stating that there is a significant positive relationship between Life Skills and School Environment among secondary school students.

In summary, the study finds a statistically significant positive correlation between Life Skills and School Environment, suggesting that a supportive school environment is associated with higher life skills among secondary school students.

Table 2 Independent 't' Test Results Comparing Life Skills Scores of Secondary School Students with Different Levels of School Environment

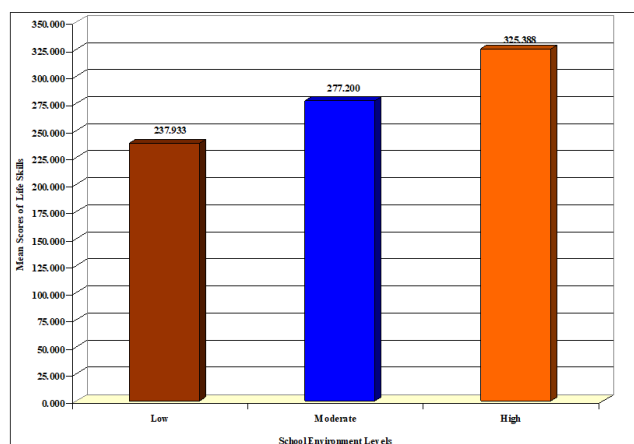
School Environment	Sample	Mean	Std. Deviation	't' Value	Sig. level
Low	15	237.933	31.963	3.69	**
Moderate	75	277.200	58.333		
Moderate	75	277.200	58.333	3.87	**
High	18	325.388	44.379		
Low	15	237.933	31.963	6.56	**
High	18	325.388	44.379		

**Significant at 0.01 level is 2.63 [N=108; df=106]

Table-2 presents the results of the independent t-test comparing the Life Skills scores of secondary school students with different levels of school environment. The analysis reveals significant differences in Life Skills scores between students with low, moderate, and high levels of school environment. Specifically:

- 1) the t-value of 3.69 indicates a significant difference ($p < 0.01$) in Life Skills scores between students with low ($M=237.933$) and moderate ($M=277.200$) levels of school environment, with moderate levels showing higher Life Skills scores;
- 2) the t-value of 3.87 indicates a significant difference ($p < 0.01$) in Life Skills scores between students with moderate ($M=277.200$) and high ($M=325.388$) levels of school environment, with high levels showing higher Life Skills scores; and
- 3) the t-value of 6.56 indicates a significant difference ($p < 0.01$) in Life Skills scores between students with low ($M=237.933$) and high ($M=325.388$) levels of school environment, with high levels showing higher Life Skills scores.

These findings suggest that students with higher levels of school environment tend to have more developed Life Skills compared to those with moderate and low levels of school environment. This is graphically represented in Graph 1.



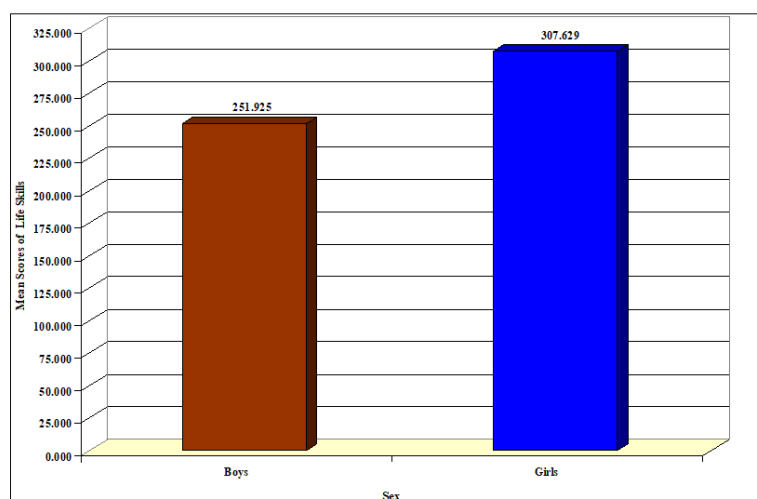
Graph 1 Comparison of mean Life Skills scores between secondary school students with regard to school environment.

Table 3 Independent 't' Test Results Comparing Life Skills Scores of Secondary School Boys and Girls

Gender	Sample	Mean	Std. Deviation	't' Value	Sig. level
Boys	54	251.925	50.409	5.63	**
Girls	54	307.629	52.366		

**Significant at 0.01 level is 2.63 [N=108; df=106]

Table 3 presents the results of the independent t-test comparing the Life Skills scores of secondary school boys and girls. The analysis reveals a significant difference in Life Skills scores between the two genders. Specifically, the t-value of 5.63 indicates a significant difference ($p < 0.01$) in Life Skills scores between boys ($M=251.925$) and girls ($M=307.629$), with girls showing higher Life Skills scores. This suggests that, on average, secondary school girls tend to have more developed Life Skills compared to boys. This finding is statistically significant at the 0.01 level and is graphically represented in Graph 2.

**Graph 2** Comparison of mean Life Skills scores between secondary school students with regard to gender.

9. RESULTS

- 1) There was a significant and positive relationship between Life Skills and School Environment of secondary school students ($r' = 0.356$ at 0.01 level).
- 2) There was a significant difference in the Life Skills between secondary school students having low and moderate levels of school environment ($t' = 3.69$ at 0.01 level).
- 3) There was a significant difference in the Life Skills between secondary school students having moderate and high levels of school environment ($t' = 3.87$ at 0.01 level).
- 4) There was a significant difference in the Life Skills between secondary school students having low and high levels of school environment ($t' = 6.56$ at 0.01 level).

There was a significant difference in the Life Skills between secondary school boys and girls ($t' = 5.63$ at 0.01 level).

10. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings of the present study reveal a significant and positive relationship between life skills and school environment among secondary school students. This is consistent with previous studies that highlighted the importance of school environment in shaping students' life skills (Eljo et al., 2023; Wahlang et al., 2022; Sudha & Mythili, 2022). The significant differences in life skills between students with low, moderate, and high levels of school environment suggest that a supportive school environment can foster the development of life skills. The significant difference in life skills

between boys and girls is consistent with Meenu & Rani's (2021) study, which observed gender differences in cognitive and interpersonal dimensions of life skills. However, the present study's findings contradict Raju and Rao's (2022) study, which found no significant gender differences in life skills.

11. CONCLUSION

The present study highlights the significance of school environment in developing life skills among secondary school students. The findings suggest that a supportive school environment can foster the development of life skills, which are essential for students' academic and personal success.

12. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 1) Schools should prioritize creating a supportive and inclusive environment that fosters the development of life skills.
- 2) Teachers and educators should be trained to integrate life skills into the curriculum and teaching practices.
- 3) Schools should provide opportunities for students to practice life skills through extracurricular activities and project-based learning.
- 4) Parents and community members should be involved in promoting life skills among students.
- 5) Educational policies should emphasize the importance of life skills and school environment in promoting students' overall development.

By implementing these strategies, schools can develop life skills among students, leading to better academic performance, social relationships and personal growth.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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