

An Investigation into the Knowledge and Application of Life Skills among Employees in High School Attached Junior Colleges of Nagpur City

¹Amit S. Yenurkar, ²Dr.Chhitij Raj

¹Research Scholar

²Director CDOE & Dean SAS DMIHER – DU, Sawangi (Meghe), Wardha - 442107, Maharashtra, India

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 02 Sept 2024

Revised: 17 Oct 2024

Accepted: 28 Oct 2024

ABSTRACT

The present study aims to explore the knowledge and application of life skills among employees of High School attached Junior Colleges of Nagpur city. Therefore, descriptive survey research design was used in collecting data which were obtained from 400 using stratified random sampling teaching and non-teaching administrative staff from the plant through a structured questionnaire. This study evaluated the level of knowledge and application of life skills among employees and also the relationship between knowledge application. The results indicated satisfactory knowledge and use of life skills by the staff, and showed that there was a positive correlation between use of life skills and its knowledge. The study postulates the need to increase the level of training programs in institutions for employees to foster their life skills and, consequently, their efficiency and the performance of the organization.

Keywords: Life Skills, Knowledge, Application of Life Skills, Educational Employees, High School Attached Junior Colleges, Professional Development, Nagpur City.

INTRODUCTION

The competence of the students' academic and administrative-supporting staff members is linked to the quality of the school and the competence of its academic and administrative staff members. Although the focus on basic technical skills and professional qualifications must continue, it is growing increasingly obvious that educational programs must also emphasize life skills that foster effectiveness in the workplace, improve interpersonal relationships, better decision making, adaptability, and organizational success. Life skills are a collection of psychosocial skills that help people to effectively face the needs and stresses of daily living in their personal and professional lives. The ten key life skills identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) are: self-awareness, understanding, interpersonal relationship skill, creative thinking, critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, coping with emotions, coping with stress, empathy, and effective communication. These skills play an important role in personal wellbeing, job performance and institution effectiveness (WHO, 1997).

Schools are living institutions, in which many things are constantly happening between the school employee and the students, the teacher and the student, the Administration and the teacher, parents and students, and others and school. In the high school attached to the junior college, workers have a variety of duties, including education, as well as administration, mentoring, managing exams, maintaining records, and coordinating the institution. These roles require high levels of academic achievement and include excellent interpersonal, emotional management, and life skills – all of which are essential for effective communication, team leadership and team collaboration, team relations, conflict resolution, and ethical conduct. Industrial HR professionals with good life skills are more capable of managing industrial stress, technological adaptations, changes in institutions, and changing demands of students in the field of HR (Tiwari & Bajpai, 2021).

The operations of educational institutions have undergone a significant shift due to rapid globalisation, digital transformation, changes in the educational framework as per the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the accountability. Staff should practice a learner-centred approach, use digital tools, develop good professional practice and be responsive to the challenges faced by the institution. As a result, life skills have become essential skills in addition to knowledge and skills in professions. Organizations are becoming more interested in the socio-emotional skills in addition to cognitive skills as they are found to contribute to collaboration, innovation, resilience, and organizational commitment (McGrath & Adler, 2022).

Life skills have always been taught to adolescent school students and to adolescents because of their role in personality development and improvement of academic performance, feeling for life and emotional quotient and to become a responsible citizen. However, few studies have focused, to date, on analysis of the life skills of employees in educational institutions, relatively speaking. Teachers and non-teaching staff play an important role as role-models for students and as important contributors of institutional culture. They have both understanding and knowledge of life skills and how to apply them have an impact on classroom management, administration efficiency, team cooperation, conflict management, communication and institutional effectiveness. Thus, measuring employees' knowledge of and the use of life skills has become a relevant field of study in education.

Knowledge of life skills is what an individual understands of the concepts, importance and meaningfulness of different social and psychosocial skills, while application is related to how these skills are actually implemented in the workplace. Theoretical understanding, knowledge or skills in communication, empathy or stress management may not necessarily be carried out in every interaction in the workplace. Experts believe this disconnect between what's known and what's used can affect employees' performance, satisfaction with their jobs, relationships with colleagues, and the work atmosphere.

There are government, aided and private schools and junior colleges attached to schools with educational activities in Nagpur City with variable in management system, employee demographics, institutional resources and organizational cultures. These differences may have an impact on staff access to life skills training and the chances to put it to use in reality. Assessment of the other life skills employed and known in the workplace will enable educational administrators to figure out the gaps in employee competency and create development programmes to address these gaps. It might also help policy makers include the training process of life skills in the process of faculty development and employee orientation programmes.

Additionally, any educational entity in the modern times demands that the staff demonstrates qualities like emotional intelligence, adaptability, resilience, collaborative problem solving, ethical behavior, and effective communication to successfully address the evolving educational landscape. Life skills help employees have positive interpersonal relationships, manage their occupational stress, make better decisions, become better leaders, and help improve institutional excellence. Holistic education is also becoming more important, and so are the employees who possess life skills and can create positive learning environments for students in the real workplace (Frontiers in Public Health 2023).

Although considerable literature emerged to recognize the importance of life skills in the educational context, empirical research with the employees of high school attached junior college is quite limited especially in the Indian context. The literature to date is largely centred on student or teacher or on the Higher Education Institution, and there is a significant gap in the research literature related to the adoption of a perspective of the school education administrative and/or teaching staff. In this context, the present study endeavors making the gap in learners knowledge and use of life skills among employees in attached junior college of Nagpurs city as a medium of investigation. The results are likely to contribute to important knowledge for educational administrators, educational policy makers, teacher educators, and educational institutions management for the inclusion of life skills in human resource development programmes and the practices of institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Life skills are well known for being important skills necessary for personal, professional and social functioning. The literature shows that life skills have a significant impact on psychosocial development, emotional intelligence, the productivity of the work, educational efficacy, and organizational performance. But most of the empirical work has

focused on life skills of students and teachers and there are a few investigations that have focused on life skills of employees in educational institutes.

Botvin & Griffin (2004) analyzed life skill training programmes and discovered that the structured life skills programmes had a sizeable impact on the participant's communication, decision-making, relationship building, and problem-solving skills. The research showed that they were promoting positive behavior and good organizing.

Bonnie Nasheeda et al. (2019) reviewed the literature broadly on life skills education and found that life skills enhance the capacity to think critically, regulate one's emotions, enhance interpersonal skills, enhance resilience, and increase capacity to adapt to the workplace. The authors noted that the embedding of life skills in educational and professional development programs ought to be in a manner that enables overall human performance to be improved.

Tiwari and Bajpai (2021) summarised the research in Indian schools on the life skills education and noted that most of the studies have centred on the psychosocial development, behaviour change, emotional skill set and enhancement of academic skills among the students. They concluded that there was insufficient research activity regarding life skills of educational employees, and suggested continuing research focused on teachers or staff of educational institutions.

Singh et al. (2023) discussed school education teachers' perceptions on priority life skills needed in school education. They found that self-awareness, communication and problem-solving skills were the most critical skills that rural students in the education system need to develop. They also discovered that teachers' years of experience had a significant impact on their understanding of priorities of life skills.

A scoping review of the 55 studies by Frontiers in Public Health found that the most widely accepted conceptualisation of life skills across an educational context is that of the WHO's framework. Communication, decision-making skills, empathy, emotional management and stress coping skills were reported as the competencies most commonly investigated, among others.

Cronin et al. (2023) conducted a systematic review on life skills education for emerging adults. They found that psychosocial skills have a relationship to lifelong learning, adaptability, successful workplace integration, and resilience. Their review highlighted that life skills are not a by-product of education and that positive employment outcomes can be attributed to life skills.

UNESCO/WHO-based programmes to teach life skills that were studied by McGrath and Adler (2022) showed that in the context of school and work, life skills are found to improve job readiness, leadership, teamwork, communication, and adaptability. The authors found that, in the twenty-first century, socio-emotional competencies are becoming important twenty-first century workplace skills.

Srikala and Kishore (2010) concluded that there is an improvement in the emotional intelligence, emotional well-being, interpersonal relations and adaptability of adolescent due to life skills education. The findings here, although for students, bear relevancy onto similar recommendations for employees who experience occupational stress and interpersonal stressors.

The researcher, Rathee (2024), concluded that, by conducting a bibliometric review on the research related to "Employability Skills" till 2023, the skills such as communication, adaptability, teamwork, emotional intelligence and problem-solving are found to be the skills that are consistently identified as necessary for workplace effectiveness. The study revealed new research interests in incorporating life skills in higher education and professional development.

Pujar et al. (2023) designed and implemented a life skills intervention targeting adolescents in India and found that constructive interventions led to measurable gains in communication skills, stress management, decision making, interpersonal skills and emotional regulation. Their research study confirms the success of structured life skills-training programmes.

Social and emotional learning programmes have been found to significantly enhance attitudes, behaviour, interpersonal relationships, academic achievement and emotional competence in a meta-analysis conducted by Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor and Schellinger (2011). Their findings support their life skill endorsement very well as viable empirical approaches to integration in the educational environments.

Lippman et al. (2015) provided a clear focus that life skills support positive youth development, resilience, leadership and work readiness. The authors recommended the importance of employees having well-rounded psychosocial competencies in the benefit of the organizations.

Ten core life skills were universally accepted in the Global Framework of the WHO (1997), which have been the basis for education schools, national governments and scholars in different parts of the world in their efforts to form life skills education programmes.

As a group, the literature reviewed shows that life skills have a positive impact on communication, emotional intelligence, adaptability, resilience, leadership, team work, stress management, and organizational effectiveness. Most of the existing literature however has focused on students, adolescents, teachers and/or the higher education setting. There is little empirical data on the knowledge and application of life skills in the context of Indian education system in attached junior colleges in high school. This gap gave a great motivation for the present investigation in Nagpur City.

OBJECTIVES:

The study intends to analysis the knowledge and level of implementation of life skills in jobs of employees, relationships between various demographic and institutional factors and relation between knowledge and utilization of life skills in jobs of the employees in Nagpur city of attached junior colleges to Nagpur university.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design is used in the study, which aims to find out the knowledge and application of life skills among the employees of high school attached junior colleges of Nagpur City. Stratified random sampling will be conducted to provide good representation of teaching, non-teaching staff from government, aided and private institutions. A sample of 400 employees will be taken for the study. A structured questionnaire will be used to obtain primary data. Descriptive and Inferential statistics are the type of statistical analysis that will be conducted on the collected data.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Descriptive and Inferential statistics was used for analyzing the data obtained from 400 employees of High School Attached Junior colleges in Nagpur City. Descriptive statistics helped to analyse the demographic profile and the extent of knowledge and use of life skills and inferential statistics were used to test the research hypothesis.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	232	58.0
	Female	168	42.0
Designation	Teaching Staff	286	71.5
	Non-Teaching Staff	114	28.5
Institution Type	Government	92	23.0
	Aided	148	37.0
	Private	160	40.0
Experience	Up to 10 Years	118	29.5
	11–20 Years	162	40.5
	Above 20 Years	120	30.0

Male accounted for majority of the respondents (58.0%) and females accounted for 42.0%) and the demographic profile shows this. The employees in educational institutions were more predominant with the 71.5 percent indicating that they teach students. The majority of the respondents were from aided and private institutes and almost 41% of the respondents had the work experience ranging from 11 years to 20 years, which is relatively experienced.

Table 2 Knowledge of Life Skills among Employees

Level of Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
Low	42	10.5
Moderate	168	42.0
High	190	47.5
Total	400	100.0

Nearly half of the respondents showed high knowledge on life skills (47.5%) while moderate knowledge was displayed among 42.0% of the respondents. Only 10.5% exhibited low knowledge. Based on these results it can be concluded that there is satisfactory awareness for employees on life skills but a good proportion of employees need more orientation and training.

Table 3 Application of Life Skills among Employees

Level of Application	Frequency	Percentage
Low	50	12.5
Moderate	176	44.0
High	174	43.5
Total	400	100.0

The findings show that seventy-two percent of the employees were applying the life skills at high level in their work while 44.0% reported moderate application. Low application was observed in only 12.5 %, which indicates that good knowledge may be further reinforced by conducting regular training programme to enhance the initiative.

Table 4 Mean Scores of Major Life Skill Dimensions

Life Skill Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Communication Skills	4.18	0.59	I
Decision Making	4.05	0.63	II
Problem Solving	3.98	0.65	III
Interpersonal Relationships	3.91	0.67	IV
Self-awareness	3.84	0.70	V
Stress Management	3.72	0.74	VI
Emotional Management	3.65	0.76	VII

Employees were the most confident in their communication skills ($M = 4.18$), meaning they had their best response to communicating ideas and interacting with stakeholders. The lowest mean score of all the dimensions in this

study was observed for emotional management ($M = 3.65$), indicating a need for a development that could improve the emotional resilience and stress management in employees.

Table 5 Correlation between Knowledge and Application of Life Skills

Variables	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value
Knowledge of Life Skills	4.02	0.54		
Application of Life Skills	3.89	0.61	0.742	0.000

The Pearson correlation coefficient value ($r = 0.742$ at $p < 0.001$) shows that there was a strong positive relationship between employees knowledge and application of life skills. Higher knowledge employees were more likely to effectively use their life skills in their work.

Hypothesis Testing

Null Hypothesis (H_0): *The employees working in High School Attached Junior Colleges of Nagpur City do not differ significantly in their knowledge and application of life skills.*

Table 6 One-Way ANOVA Showing Difference in Knowledge and Application of Life Skills

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig. (p)
Between Groups	21.846	2	10.923	7.486	0.001
Within Groups	579.654	397	1.460		
Total	601.500	399			

The F-value obtained is significant at statistical level 0.001 level ($p < 0.05$). Thus the null hypothesis is rejected. The results have shown that there is significant difference among the employees in terms of their knowledge and application of life skills among different comparison groups considered in the study (Institution of type). The implication is that there is an influence of organizational environment and institutional attributes on how life skills have been acquired and implemented among the employees.

The outcomes also indicate that the institutions that give more opportunities for professional development, collaborative working environment and training on life skills have employees with a higher level of knowledge and use of life skills. This means setting up life skills development programmes in schools in a structured manner so that all types of schools are equipped with the same developed life skills.

DISCUSSION

The finding of the study reveals that employees in High School Attached Junior colleges of the Nagpur City have adequate knowledge about life skills and majority of them are moderate to high level of awareness and skills application. Employees' skills in communication, decision making and problem solving were most outstanding, suggesting that they are well equipped to perform their professional duties, maintain effective communication with fellow employees and students, and to make effective choices regarding problems in their workplace. For stress management and emotional management, however, low scores compare favorably indicate that employees are under stress when trying to deal with work-related situations and manage their emotions in challenging educational settings.

The study also showed a high positive correlation between knowledge and implementation of life skills, which are life skills that are implemented well if knowledge is high and the vice versa. The study found there were significant distinctions between the employees of the various institutions, meaning that organizational climate, the presence of training programmes, administrative support and chances for professional development appear to have an effect on the acquisition and implementation of life skills. However, it is a composite of all of these findings that really emphasize the need for the introduction of structured life skills training into the employee development initiatives to increase professional competence, better relationships of with others in the workplace, organisational effectiveness and contribution to the general quality of education institutions.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion of the study is that the level of Knowledge and application of Life skills of High School Attached Junior Colleges of Nagpur City was found to be satisfactory, skills of communication, decision making and problem solving are well developed in them. The knowledge related to the application is strong, with a positive correlation, meaning that as the percentage of knowledge increased, the amount of knowledge application also increased. Emotional Management and stress are also comparatively low, however, indicating need for further capacity building. The discrepancies found between the categories of institutions indicate that organizational support, professional development and institutional environment is important to improving life skills and productivity of employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There must be regular life skills training programmes, workshops and professional development sessions for both teaching and non-teaching staff in educational institutions, that focus on the development of skills in stress management, emotional intelligence, interpersonal communication and conflict resolution skills. Management should invite life skills to both employee induction policies and ongoing training policies for present employees, and promote cooperative learning and mentoring. Competency assessment should also be done periodically with workers to detect competency gaps and assess training results. Such exercises will provide support for employee performance, better institutional culture, better relationship in the work place and ultimately better quality and effectiveness of secondary and higher secondary education.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The sample of only High School Attached Junior Colleges of Nagpur city may limit the generalizability of the results for other educational institutions in other areas or educational institutions in other States. The study relies on primary data obtained from a structured questionnaire and the response is conditioned by the honesty and perceptions of the respondents, and so could lead to response bias. The research uses a cross sectional design which investigates knowledge and usage of life skills at only one time and won't reveal change over time. Moreover, demographic and institutional characteristics were selected as the focus of the study since other factors including organizational culture, leadership style, job satisfaction, job motivation, psychological state etc. were not considered.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The geographic scope of future studies may include district/state/national levels if broadly comparing to see if findings can be generalized to other geographical scales. Comparative research can also be done between government schools, aided schools, private, and autonomous educational institutions or research can be done between the levels of education like schools, colleges, and universities. To explore changes over time on life skills and to provide more depth of understanding of the employee's experience, a researcher might choose to use a longitudinal or a mixed methods research design. Some more studies can be conducted to see how organizational climate, leadership, emotional intelligence, work-life balance, job satisfaction, employee engagement and professional development programmes can influence the knowledge and application of life skills. Experimental studies can also be carried out to assess the impact of systematic programs that develop life skills to increase the effectiveness of employment and the efficiency of the institution.

REFERENCES

- [1] Botvin, G. J., & Griffin, K. W. (2004). Life skills training: Empirical findings and future directions. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 25(2), 211–232.
- [2] Cronin, L. D., et al. (2023). A scoping review of life skills development and transfer in emerging adults. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*.
- [3] Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405–432.
- [4] Lippman, L. H., Ryberg, R., Carney, R., & Moore, K. A. (2015). Workforce connections: Key soft skills that foster youth workforce success. *Child Trends*.
- [5] McGrath, R. E., & Adler, A. (2022). *Skills for life: A review of life skills and their measurability, malleability, and meaningfulness*. Inter-American Development Bank.
- [6] Nasheeda, A., Abdullah, H. B., Krauss, S. E., & Ahmed, N. B. (2019). A narrative systematic review of life skills education. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 24(3), 362–379.
- [7] Pujar, L., et al. (2023). Youth focused life skills training and counselling services program—An inter-sectoral initiative in India. *PLOS ONE*, 18(4).
- [8] Rathee, V. (2024). Employability skills among work-ready professionals in higher education: Mapping the field through bibliometric analysis with R Studio. (*Review based on studies through 2023*).
- [9] Singh, S., & colleagues. (2023). Life skills to be developed for students at the school level. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 37(6–7), 1425–1444.
- [10] Srikala, B., & Kishore, K. K. (2010). Empowering adolescents with life skills education. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 52(4), 344–349.
- [11] Tiwari, P., & Bajpai, A. (2021). Life skills education in school setting: A review of research in the Indian context. *Indian Educational Review*, 59(1), 5–30.
- [12] World Health Organization. (1997). *Life skills education for children and adolescents in schools*. Geneva: WHO.
- [13] World Health Organization. (1999). *Partners in life skills education: Conclusions from a United Nations inter-agency meeting*.
- [14] UNICEF. (2012). *Global evaluation of life skills education programmes*.
- [15] Frontiers in Public Health. (2023). Defining life skills in health promotion at school: A scoping review. *Frontiers in Public Health*.