

Adolescent Life Skills Development and Future Readiness: A Qualitative Analysis and Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

In today's dynamic world, adolescent life skills development plays a crucial role in ensuring future readiness, youth employability, and overall, well-being. Essential 21-century skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, emotional intelligence, communication and adaptability help adolescent navigate academic, professional, and personal challenges. This study employs a qualitative approach, integrating a descriptive survey questionnaire of 20 adolescents along with systematic literature review of 35 studies to explore how school-based life skills education contributes to career readiness in youth. Additionally, it highlights life skills activities and strategies adopted by schools in Delhi to enhance student preparedness. The primary data is collected through an open-ended questionnaire to understand students' opinions on key life skills, challenges in skill development. The systematic literature review identifies trends in emotional intelligence in adolescents, school-based interventions, and challenges such as curriculum limitations, socio-economic barriers and lack of experiential training. Findings indicate that while students recognize the importance of life skills, practical applications within the education system remains limited. By analysing real-world school interventions of some schools in Delhi, the study provides insights into successful strategies such as interactive learning modules, mentorship programs, self-awareness boosting workshops and policy-driven life skills integration. The research emphasizes the significance of holistic education policies to equip adolescents with resilience,

decision taking abilities and adaptability for an evolving workforce. Findings contribute to the discourse on life skills education, advocating for an inclusive, experiential, and future-oriented approach to adolescent development.

Keywords: Adolescent Life Skills; Future Readiness; Youth Employability; 21stCentury Skills; Career Readiness in Youth

1. Introduction

Life skills are essential abilities, attitudes and socio-emotional competencies that help individuals learn, make informed decisions, and lead productive lives. They enhance mental well-being, support foundational skills like literacy and digital proficiency, and apply to areas such as gender equality, environmental education, and health promotion. Life skills empower young people to engage in communities, pursue lifelong learning, and build positive relationships. Various organisations define life skills based on their programmatic focus. The World Health Organisation (WHO) views them as abilities that foster adaptive and positive behaviours to handle daily challenges, particularly in health. The World Bank takes a broader approach, defining life skills as social and behavioural competencies, often called soft or noncognitive skills, essential for navigating everyday life. UNICEF's MENA framework sees life skills development as a holistic process across four dimensions-cognitive, individual, social and instrumental- integral to quality education. Overall, life skills are universally relevant yet adaptable to different contexts. Integrating life skills into school curricula enhances the wellbeing of children and adolescents. The World Health Organisation (WHO) highlights essential skills such as decision making for informed choices, creative and critical thinking for problem solving and communication for effective expression. Self-awareness, empathy and interpersonal skills strengthen social interactions, while coping with emotions and stress fosters resilience. Together, these skills empower individuals to navigate challenges, promoting personal growth and overall well-being.

Adolescence is a dynamic and transformative phase, marking the transition from childhood to adulthood. According to American Psychological Association (APA), it begins with puberty (around 10-12 years old) and continues until physiological maturity (about 19 years), though the exact timeline varies for each individual. This period is filled with growth, exploration and self-discovery, but it also comes with its fair share of challenges-emotional ups and downs peer pressure, and the struggle to find one's place in the world. With increasing independence, adolescents make crucial decisions about their identity, relationships and future. Developing essential life skills during this time helps them manage emotions, build healthy relationships, and make informed choices. By fostering self-awareness, communication and resilience, life skill education empowers young people to navigate challenges with confidence, preparing them for adulthood and a successful future.

CBSE mandates Life Skills Education for classes VI–X to foster self-confidence, eco-sensitivity, and a positive outlook. While schools have made progress, stronger curriculum integration and stakeholders capacity building are needed. To support this, an Advocacy Programme empowers school leaders to champion students' socio-emotional well-being. Aligned with NEP 2020, which emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability, integrating life skills enhances problem-solving, communication and collaboration skills. It builds character, responsibility and ethical decision-making, preparing students for both academic success and real-world challenges. By fostering resilience, adaptability, and independent thinking, Life Skills Education equips adolescents with the competencies needed for future careers, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning. These skills, including teamwork, leadership, decision - making and emotional intelligence, are highly valued in the workplace, enhancing employability and preparing students for dynamic and evolving job market.

1.1 Objectives

1. To explore the role of life skills education in enhancing adolescent future readiness and employability.
2. To identify key challenges students, face in acquiring and applying life skills in daily life.
3. To analyse strategies used by schools in Delhi to foster life skills and career preparedness.
4. To recommend improvements in school curricula for better integration of life skill education

2. Literature Review

A literature review was conducted in which 35 research papers and journal articles were reviewed:

Life skill development among adolescents: Singla et al. (2019) reviewed 50 RCTs on adolescent life skills programs in LMICs, showing improvements in mental health (PTSD, depression, anxiety, anger) and life skills. Success factors include stress management, interpersonal skills, and parent-child interactions, but biases and missing data were noted. Danish et al. (2002) discuss a sports-based intervention for life skills development, introducing the Sports United program with guidelines for implementation. Vranda & Chandrasekhar-Rao (2007) highlight adolescence as a critical phase with stress and risky behaviors. WHO (1993) defines ten core life skills for well-being. Bharath et al. (2002, 2003, 2005) developed India's Cascade Model for schools, while Vranda (2009) created the Life Skills Scale (LSS). Programs like AEP and NIMHANS train youth in psychosocial skills. Young et al. (2006) found a life skills-based PE program for ninth-grade girls increased class activity ($P < .001$), reduced TV time ($P = .03$), and improved fitness ($P < .001$) but did not impact overall energy use. Jafarigiv & Peyman (2019) found life skills training with health literacy improved self-esteem and self-efficacy ($p < .001$). Yankey & Biswas (2012) showed LST reduces stress among Tibetan refugee adolescents.

Anand et al. (2013) found life skills training increased adolescent physical activity in Delhi. Roy et al. (2016) showed a seven-session LST reduced stress among 42 adolescent boys. Kaur (2011) found a three-month life skills program improved emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and self-esteem in college students. Kaur & Kaur (2022) found a 40-session LST improved 9th graders' psychological well-being. Ayub et al. (2015) evaluated the Plan-It Girls program, finding early exposure enhances self-esteem, self-efficacy, gender attitudes, and employability. Raj & Sathiyam (2025) explored an AI-driven recommendation system for life skills and wellbeing. Srinivasan et al. (2025) found Nae Disha 3 moderately improved resilience but had no major impact on mental health or gender attitudes. Nag et al. (2025) reviewed five school-based interventions in India promoting gender equality, all showing positive outcomes. Rajamanickam et al. (2025) found emotional learning improves well-being through self-regulation, relationships, and prosocial behaviour but does not boost academic performance. Kumar & Kant (2025) showed Culturally Responsive Instruction enhances social, emotional, and collaborative skills among Bihar middle schoolers. Podiya et al. (2025) reviewed 11 studies (2000–2023) on school climate, linking positive factors to lower stress, higher self-esteem, and academic success. Pradeep et al. (2019) evaluated Karnataka's YLSECS program, finding improved awareness and confidence but a need for post-training support.

Future Readiness among Adolescents: Gee et al. (2020) highlight the need for innovative strategies to enhance college and career readiness for underserved youth, emphasizing evidence-based factors and stakeholder perspectives. Bansal & Kapur (2024) examine life skills' impact on job readiness and career success, proposing a student-industry alignment framework. Burrus et al. (2018) reviewed 36 studies on adolescent transition interventions, finding 75% had positive outcomes but called for more rigorous, theory-driven approaches. Marciniak et al. (2022) identified fragmented career preparedness concepts, proposing a framework of attitudes, knowledge, competencies, and behaviours. Nelson & Condrin (2008) developed the VRIL program for psychiatrically impaired adolescents, integrating structured learning with daily living skills. Knox (2023) found behaviour, peer relationships, and family/community support enhance college and career readiness among 8,541 rural adolescents. Santha et al. (2019) analysed 100 livelihood

programs, noting innovation but frequent failure due to funding gaps, advocating multi-stakeholder partnerships. Ibararan et al. (2014) evaluated the Dominican Republic's Juventud y Empleo program, finding increased job formality for men, earnings growth, and reduced teenage pregnancy but no overall employment impact. Lifshitz (2017) assessed an Israeli employability program for at-risk youth, highlighting improved job skills and the need for culturally tailored approaches. Jackson & Lambert (2023) found many parents lack awareness of job trends, underscoring the need for better parental career guidance. Leventhal et al. (2021) found Bihar's Youth First program improved problem-solving and future planning, enhancing youth resilience. Ningthoujam et al. (2022) explored career aspirations among Manipur youth, noting high ambition but barriers like limited opportunities and socioeconomic constraints, with family support being crucial. Kumar et al. (2021) found Plan-It Girls improved self-esteem, self-efficacy, gender attitudes, and employability, with early exposure most effective. Kounkroo (2025) developed the SBULCK Model in Thailand, significantly enhancing 21st-century skills like emotional management, flexibility, and leadership. Osiesi & Blignaut (2025) found the TEC at Nelson Mandela University fosters 21st-century skills but faces workload and digital literacy challenges. Chasokela (2025) examined technology integration in STEM education in Zimbabwe, identifying faculty training and resource gaps as key challenges, recommending better collaboration and support.

The present study focuses on the role of school-based programs and parental involvement in fostering life skills among adolescent. It examines challenges in acquiring skills like problem solving, emotional intelligence, and adaptability while assessing the strategies used by schools in Delhi to enhance career preparedness. As traditional education often overlooks practical skills, this study aims to provide insights and recommendations to improve life skills education for better future readiness.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a Qualitative approach, combining a descriptive survey questionnaire administered to 20 adolescents with a systematic literature review of 35 studies. Primary data is gathered through an open-ended questionnaire designed to capture students' perspectives on the role of school, teachers and parents on instilling life skill development in adolescents. Thematic analysis was employed to explore the sub-themes identified in the study. The systematic literature review highlights the important of life skill education in students' life and making them equip to handle the future challenges effectively.

3.2. Participants and Setting

The study employed using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique. The sample of the study consisted of 20 participants between the age group of 16-18 years. The students studying in Delhi private school were chosen for the study. An exploratory research approach was used to gather the data, making it especially useful for understanding and gaining insights on the topics which are not fully understood.

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Participants aged 16-18 years.
2. Participants studying in a private school in Delhi.
3. The focused literature studies were conducted between 2005-2025.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Participants from Government School.

2. Participants who are below 16 or above 18 years of age.

4. Results

Tabular Representation of Theme-Based Analysis of Life skill Education

S.NO	Themes	Description	Evidence
1. Confidence in Applying Life skills			
	Confidence in Applying Life skills	The transition from learning life skills to applying them in real world scenarios.	Many students feel somewhat confidence but acknowledge the gap between theory and practice. Practical exposure strengthens understanding.
	Importance of practice and adaptability.	Life Skill requires continuous learning and real-world application to develop confidence.	Some respondents expressed confidence in problem solving and decision making while others highlighted struggles with applying skills consistently.
	Situational Confidence and Skill refinement	Confidence fluctuates depending on experience, context and personal growth.	While some feel prepared for real world challenges, other noted that unexpected situations test their adaptability.
2. Role of Teachers, Parents and mentors			
	Guidance and Support	Teacher, parents, and mentors shape the learning process through structured guidance.	Teachers provide learning opportunities; parents reinforce emotional intelligence and financial literacy; mentor offer career insights.
	Teaching Problem Solving and communication	Critical thinking, group discussions and role-playing are key tools in life skills education.	Respondents mentioned group activities, discussions and real-life storytelling as effective ways to develop skills.

Experiential Learning and Mentorship	Real-world exposure through mentorship, internship and shadowing professionals.	Mentors help in career planning, leadership training, and real-world decision making by sharing their personal experiences.
3. Challenges in Applying Life skills		
Unpredictability of real-world scenarios	Real-life situations often do not have predefined solutions, making adaptability crucial.	Many respondents noted that while they have learned problem techniques, applying them in high pressure situations remains difficult.
Emotional Intelligence and Stress management	The ability to manage stress, emotions and interpersonal relationships effectively.	Some individuals feel confident in handling conflict resolution, while others struggle with maintaining composure under pressure.
Confidence fluctuations	Varying levels of confidence due to external challenges and self-doubt	Several responses mentioned moments of high confidence followed by self-doubt in complex situations.
4. Enhancing life skill education		
Real world applications and practical training	Moving beyond textbooks to experiential learning such as internships and simulations	Schools should incorporate hands on training, mentorship programs, role playing and interactive workshops to bridge the gap between knowledge and application.
Financial Literacy and Career Readiness	Equipping students with knowledge about financial management, budgeting and entrepreneurship.	Respondents emphasized the need for financial literacy training, career exploration and exposure to professional environments.
Emotional Intelligence and Mental Health	Teaching students how to manage emotions, deal with stress and build resilience.	Schools should integrate mental health awareness, stress management techniques and peer support programs.
Communication and Interpersonal Skills	Developing the ability to express thoughts effectively and build relationships.	Respondents stressed the significance of interactive discussions, public speaking and real-life conversation practice.

5. Effective Teaching strategies for life skills		
Interactive and experiential learning	Engaging students through hands on activities, role playing and simulations.	The most effective methods include group discussions, real world case studies, and problem-solving exercises.
Mentorship and career exposure	Pairing students with mentors for practical learning and career guidance.	Guest lectures, career fairs and industry collaborations can enhance life skill education.
Integration of technology and future skills	Preparing students for technological advancements and digital literacy.	School should introduce coding, AI awareness and digital communication to align with modern job markets.

5. Discussion

The aim of this study is to explore the role of teachers, parents and mentors in life skills education and to identify useful strategies for improving life skills training in school and preparing adolescents for their future life. Through the qualitative thematic analysis and an in- depth review of 35 scholarly articles, this study provides a comprehensive examination of key themes, offering a deeper understanding of life skills education and its practical implications. The primary data was collected from 20 adolescents falling in the age group 16-18 years. The data was thematically analysed and the findings highlight the crucial role of life skills in education in framing an individual's ability to navigate personal and professional challenges. The responses emphasize the significance of practical application, mentorship, emotional intelligence and real-world exposure in increasing life skills development. Many participants acknowledge that while they have some level of confidence in their ability to apply life skills, there remains a significant gap between theoretical knowledge and real works execution. This gap underscores the need for situational adaptability and continuous practice. These results align with previous research suggesting that experiential learning methods, such as problem- solving activities and interactive discussions are key to bridging the gap between knowledge and application (kolb,1984). Similarly, Singla et al. (2019) reviewed 50 randomized controlled RCTs on adolescent life skills program in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), highlighting that stress management, interpersonal skills and parent child interactions play a crucial; role in the success of such programs.

Teachers, parents and mentors play a significant role in life skills education by providing guidance, support and real- life examples. Teachers introduce problem solving, communication and critical thinking through structured lesson and activities while parents instil emotional intelligence and financial literacy through everyday interactions. Mentors offer career guidance leadership training and insights from personal experiences, contributing to a well-rounded skill set. The presence of supportive figures helps individuals develop resilience and confidence in applying life skills in real world situations. This is supported by a research study done by Kaur & Kaur (2022), who found that a 40-session life skill training (LST) program significantly improved psychological well-being among ninth graders. Similarly, Rajamanickam et al. (2025) found that emotional learning enhances well-being by fostering self-regulations, interpersonal relationships and prosocial behaviour. Jackson and Lambert (2023) also emphasized the need for parental involvement, showing that many parents lack awareness of evolving job trends, which impacts students' career readiness. These findings reinforce the importance of integrating parents and mentors into school-based life skill education.

Top schools in Delhi have integrated innovative life skills programs to enhance student

preparedness. The Shri Ram school emphasizes mindfulness and emotional intelligence, while The Heritage School focuses on experiential learning and decision making. Vasant Valley school runs mentorship and career-oriented workshops and Amity International school fosters leadership through extracurriculars. DPS RK Puram integrates career readiness and vocational training, while The British school promotes digital literacy in AI, coding and cyber safety. Schools such as Venkateshwar, GD Goenka, Sanskriti, Bal Bharti, and Maxfort Rohini are developing well-rounded pupils by incorporating STEAM-based learning via Atal Tinkering Labs, financial literacy programs, and practical training. These efforts promote critical thinking, adaptability, and problem solving, in line with UNESCO (2016), which highlights the long-term benefits of life skills education. Despite getting life skills instruction, many students struggle to handle stress, negotiate emotions, and make decisions under pressure owing to a lack of real-world experience. Roy et al. (2016), Yankey & Biswas (2012), and Kaur (2011) found that organized training greatly improved emotional intelligence and resilience. This emphasizes the value of hands-on learning techniques such as mentorship and real-world simulations (Goleman, 1995).

To bridge this gap, experts recommend moving away from traditional lecture-based teaching toward more interactive approaches such as internships, mentorship, and role-playing exercises. Digital literacy, financial education, and career readiness are also crucial for preparing students for the evolving job market. Research by Kounkroo (2025) in Thailand and Osiesi & Blignaut (2025) at Nelson Mandela University signifies the need to integrate technology in education while addressing digital literacy gaps (World Economic Forum, 2020).

5.1. Suggestions and Recommendations

Future studies should include schools from different regions to improve generalizability. Using a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative analysis, can provide deeper insights. Additionally, longitudinal research can help assess the long-term impact of life skills educations on career readiness and emotional well-being.

Schools should integrate life skills education through practical activities, workshops and real-world applications to enhance student learning. Teacher training programs must equip educators with effective strategies for developing life skills in adolescents. Strengthening school-parent collaboration through interactive sessions can support students 'skill building' and can give them broader perspective towards life. Finally, implementing hands-on and experiential learning methods, such as peer mentoring, role playing and real-life stimulations can make life skill education more engaging and impactful.

6. Conclusions

To make life skills education truly effective, schools must move beyond theory and focus on real world applications. A blend of experiential learning, mentorship and mental health awareness and technological adaptability will better equip students for future challenges. This study provides insights for educators, policymakers and parents on the role of schools and families in fostering life skills among adolescents. Understanding school-based programs can help refine teaching approaches to enhance problem-solving, emotional intelligence and adaptability. It also emphasizes parental involvement and foster policy recommendations for integrating life skill education into curricula, improving career readiness and emotional- wellbeing.

The study focuses only on schools in Delhi, limiting its generalizability to other regions. Self-reported data may introduce bias, as responses could be influenced by personal perceptions. Additionally, the qualitative approach lacks quantitative comparisons, restricting statistical analysis of life skills programs effectiveness.

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