

Does the Locality and Gender of Higher Secondary Students Influence their Life Skills Preferences

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Abstract

Implicit in the right kind of education is the cultivation of a complete human being with capabilities enhanced in all dimensions: economical, social, cultural, political and ethical. But, unfortunately the learning experiences provided in the formal classroom system are so much devoid of real life situation that the so-called 'educated' is rarely competent enough to resolve the intricate real life issues courageously. It requires something more to come out of any crisis in the entire gamut of one's personal, professional and social life and that vital missing link in the education process is the acquisition of "Life Skills" — capabilities which prepare the learner to cope with life's diverse challenges. As life skills based education can address a wide range of issues relevant to adolescents, the development of life skills should be the primary concern of secondary education. Life skills are innumerable, so life skills preferences of higher secondary students, if correctly identified would be helpful to get the preliminary idea of those life skills that should be integrated into the existing curriculum of secondary education. Students at higher secondary level are mature enough to express their fair and frank preferences which may prove valuable in the pursuit of quality education. The present paper explores the higher secondary students' life skills preferences with respect to their locality and gender difference. A descriptive cross sectional survey of a sample of four hundred students of Class XI from higher secondary schools of Rajasthan was done with the help of two self-made questionnaires namely situational test and preference sheet. The findings were that life skills preferences of higher

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secondary students are influenced largely by their locality but in case of gender, urban boys and urban girls do not differ in their life skills preferences as the rural boys and rural girls do.

Introduction

Education in the true sense is the cultivation of an integrated individual with an integrated comprehension of life that enables one to meet ever-increasing complexities of life. The aim of any worthwhile education is to prepare the child for constructive living, one who seeks maximum satisfaction within the bounds of social norms while making due contribution towards the welfare of the society. So, education must develop such abilities and capacities in the child, that as one grows older, one is able to confront the intricate real life issues courageously and solve them successfully.

Youth today faces different challenges in life in the changed world brought about by the decline of the rural agricultural economy, migration, urbanisation, mass communication, commercialisation, market expansion, globalisation, etc. Growing pace of the modern life poses enormous demands and challenges on youth. The situation facing young people in today's world clearly shows that acquisition of knowledge through academic education is not sufficient to prepare adolescents to cope with the intricate real life issues. The challenges one faces are many and require more than even the best numeracy and literacy skills. So, apart from academic knowledge, education must train a child to have set of skills to face the challenges of day to day life, which in general are termed as "Life Skills".

In the past few years in particular, following the opening up of the Indian economy and technological sea-change, there's been growing awareness among school and college managements that examination success does not necessarily translate into success in personal and professional life. It requires something more than mugging up textbooks to be a successful doctor, engineer, architect, teacher, manager or entrepreneur. A new impetus to education is therefore the need for a new family of skills, the psychosocial abilities or life skills, to bridge the gap between the practical know how (basic functioning) and capabilities (Refined functioning). Education that accommodates both the dimensions of practical and psychosocial skill is sufficient to achieve an ultimate goal of education i.e. to develop a 'Complete Person/Human' with capabilities enhanced in all dimensions: economical, social, cultural, political and ethical. Therefore, many countries are now considering the development of life skills-based education in response to the need to reform traditional education systems which appear to be out of step with the realities and the challenges of modern social and economic life.

National and International Recommendations on Life Skills

The need to link life skills with education has been highlighted directly and indirectly in a number of National

and International recommendations as described below:

- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, New York, 1989, linked life skills to education by stating that education should be directed towards the development of the child's fullest potential. The 1990 Jomtien Declaration on 'Education for All' took this vision further and included life skills among essential learning tools for survival, capacity development and quality of life.
- as per the report of Inter-Agency Meeting on Life Skills Education, WHO, Geneva, April 1998: "Life skills education is designed to facilitate the practice and reinforcement of psychosocial skills in a culturally and developmentally appropriate way; it contributes to the promotion of personal and social development, the prevention of health and social problems, and the protection of human rights. There is a need for inter-agency collaboration to accelerate programming, monitoring and evaluation for life skills education in and out of schools. In particular, it suggested collaboration in the design of life skills curricula in schools; the development of tools for the monitoring and evaluation of life skills education initiatives; the development of guidelines and training materials to support life skills initiatives for out-of-school children and adolescents; and an e-mail network to facilitate exchange of information between agencies".
- During the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, April 2000, the global education community specifically included the acquisition of "life skills" in two of its six goals and stressed on the need for not only psychomotor or practical skills, but also those psychosocial abilities – life skills – that will enable us to learn and use knowledge, to develop reasoning and analytical strengths, to manage emotions and to live with and relate to others.
- National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE), 2000 threw light on the need of internalising life skills in present Educational system. As per National Curriculum Framework NCF 2005, the central reason for including life skills education in the school curriculum is that an interventional: preventive and developmental approach to equipping school children (learners) in the senior phase with coping skills will help them to deal effectively with predictable developmental tasks and an ever changing world.
- Report of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Life Skills, UNESCO, Paris, 2004, has closely linked Life Skills Education to sustainable human development and proposed to emphasis on assisting countries in setting up measurable life skills education with an objective of improving the general quality of education as well as enabling the learner to cope with new challenges. Assessment of life skills-based education at the local and individual levels must be based on observed changes in

a learner's acquisition and use of knowledge, the expression of values and attitudes, development of skills, and interactions with the social and physical environment.

- The Central Board of Secondary Education (C.B.S.E.) has already introduced Life skill education as a part of the curriculum in all its affiliated schools and suggested that the pedagogy to be adopted for teaching life skill education has to be interactive, experimental and facilitative. The spirit of the above subject should be extended beyond the classroom walls and scope should be provided for the same in the co-curricular and activities. The subject has to be evaluated in context and as a part of the continuous and comprehensive evaluation. Life skills curriculum can facilitate in imbining right attitudes for the holistic growth of the learners”.*

Rationale of the Study: As life skills based education can address a wide range of issues relevant to adolescents, it has been widely recognised that the development of life skills in adolescents is of utmost importance. The first and foremost step towards the promotion of life skills in secondary education is to sensitise every student towards life skills which the present study is attempting to do. Students are ultimate stakeholders, direct users and consumers of the education system hence considering their perceptions, preferences and opinions may go a long way in improving the quality of education. In school

education, the students at the higher secondary level become a little mature and can express their fair and frank preferences. Life skills preferences of higher secondary student if correctly identified would be helpful to get the preliminary idea of those life skills that should be integrated with top priority into the existing curriculum of secondary education. The diversity of cultures and heterogeneity, such as rural and urban, socially disadvantaged gender differences are crucial pointers towards the fact that each student has different problems of his/her own and needs different skills to cope up with them, so is their preference for life skills. It would also point out the least preferred life skills needed to be strengthened in order to make every student a wholesome personality irrespective of their gender and locality. This in turn would lead to the preparation of better future citizens contributing member of the family, the society and world at large. So, the researcher decided to undertake the present study in order to explore the preferential choices of higher secondary students for different life skills.

Identification of Life Skills: There is no definitive list of life skills. Given the diversity of contexts, backgrounds and cultures, life skills can be innumerable, some specific to certain risk situation and others of a generic nature. Although the exact nature and description of life skills are likely to differ across social and cultural context, core life skills identified by various national and international organisations like UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO , Pan American Health

* C.B.S.E., Circular No. : 11/04, No. D(A)/PA/LS/04

Organization (Sep. 2001) etc. served as an important guide to the researcher for reflecting on what skills should be considered to be core life skills. The following 9 life skills which were found common in all the above mentioned sources and applicable across a wide range of contexts in daily life and risk situations were selected for the present study:

- (1) Problem Solving Skills
- (2) Critical Thinking Skills
- (3) Self-awareness building Skills
- (4) Stress management skills
- (5) Interpersonal Skills
- (6) Assertive Skills
- (7) Decision Making Skills
- (8) Communication Skills
- (9) Empathy skills

Objectives of the Study: The study envisaged the following objectives:

- to find whether the locality of higher secondary students influence their life skills preferences.
- to find whether the gender of higher secondary students influence their life skills preferences.

Hypothesis: In order to realise the above objectives of the study, following null hypotheses were framed.

- There is no significant difference between the life skills preferences of urban boys and rural boys at the higher secondary level.
- There is no significant difference between the life skills preferences of urban girls and rural girls at the higher secondary level.
- There is no significant difference between the life skills preferences of urban boys and urban girls at the higher secondary level.

- There is no significant difference between the life skills preferences of rural boys and rural girls at the higher secondary level.

Population and Sample

Population in the study included all higher secondary school students of Rajasthan state while the sample consisted of four hundred students studying in standard XI in the age group 16-to-17 years from selected schools of six major districts namely Jaipur, Sikar, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Udaipur representing the whole state of Rajasthan. Systematic random sample selection procedure used by researcher is shown in the Figure 1 and the exact numbers of the cases in the final sample is given in the Table 1.

Table 1
Distribution of Sample

Sl. No.	Type of School	Boys	Girls	No. of Students
1	Urban	103	102	205
2	Rural	100	95	195
	Total	203	197	N=400

Variables: Life skills preference is a dependent variable while locality and gender of students are independent variables in the study.

Research Instruments: The following tools were used for collection of data.

(1) Situational Test for Life Skills Preferences (Self made)

The first tool for data collection was a situation based questionnaire, comprising of items with closed-responses prepared in English and Hindi as well. This questionnaire was prepared to seek the preferential choice of respondents

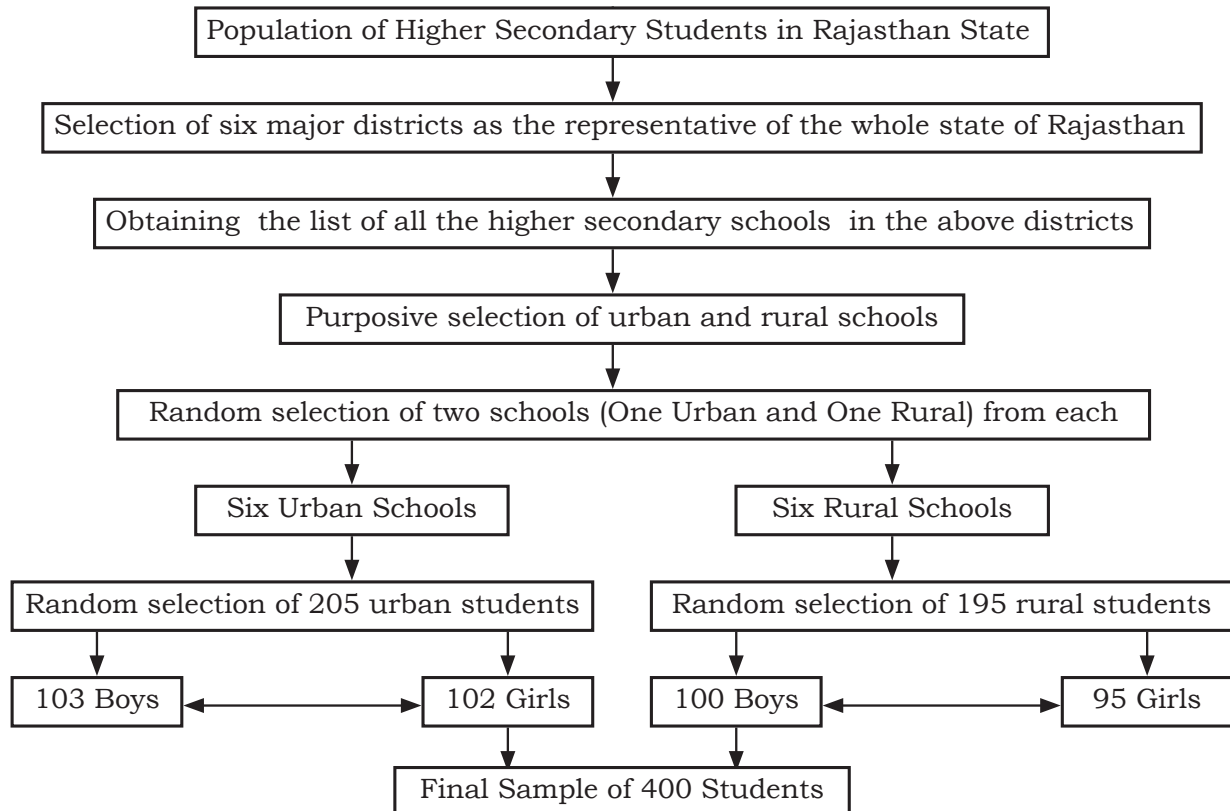


Figure 1 : Systematic Randomisation Procedure of Sample Selection

for the nine kinds of life skills been included in the study. It comprised of thirty-six hypothetical common real life situations or problems faced by adolescents in day to day life. There were four items mentioned under each life skill and under each item there were four options. All the four options were basically a possible solution to tackle that problematic situation. Out of four options, only one corresponded to the solution based on life skill. Respondents were supposed to read each situation carefully and tick any one of the option which he/she finds most preferable solution to deal with the concerned situation. The option that corresponded to the life skill based solution to the problem was considered as a positive response and

score value of each positive response was one. The percentage of preference for each life skill was calculated by counting all the items with positive responses and dividing this total by the number of items the respondent answered for that domain multiplied by 100. Respondent's preference score from 100% to 75% was considered as respondent showing high preference for that life skill. Respondent's preference score as 50% or less was not considered as preferable life skill. Thus, in this way answers in the filled in questionnaire were scored and scores were transferred to tally sheets, frequency of preferences for each life skill was calculated and tabulated for the further statistical operations (Appendix I).

(2) Life Skills Preference sheet (Self made)

This tool was constructed by the researcher to know the preferential choice of the respondents for those life skills that they considered most valuable in his/her day to day life in a direct manner and prepared in English and Hindi. In a way, this preference sheet proved helpful in testing the reliability and validity of the situational test. In this tool, list of all the 9 life skills was given. Against each life skill there were three alternatives given in the form of (1) (2) and (3) which corresponded to the responses (Preferred), (Neutral) and (Not preferred) respectively. Respondents were supposed to tick any one to show their preference or non preference for that life skill. Thus, preferences shown in the preference sheet were transferred to tally sheets. Frequency of preferences for each life skill was calculated and tabulated for the further statistical operations (Appendix II).

Analysis of Data

Statistical techniques employed for the data analysis were Frequency, Percentage, and Chi-Square test of independence to test the null hypotheses. Equivalent – form reliability analysis of a situational test by preference sheet was also done where two different versions of the instruments were created and applied on the same subjects to measure the same thing during the same time period. The scores on the two instruments were correlated to calculate the consistency between situational test and preference sheet test scores.

(a) Analysis and Interpretation of data from Situational test

Locality based analysis - Figure 2 exhibits that most preferred life skill by urban boys was problem solving skill (68%) while interpersonal relationship skill (65%) was the most preferred life skills by rural boys. The least preferred life skill by urban boys was empathy (27%) while for rural boys, critical thinking skill (20%) was the least preferred skill. Table 2 shows chi-square values for the statistical significance of the differences in life skills preferences of urban boys VS rural boys is 24 which is much greater than table value of χ^2 for 8 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance i.e. 15.51, thus the null hypothesis no.1 was rejected. Similarly, In case of urban girls Vs rural girls, the most preferred life skill by urban girls was stress management skill (68%) while interpersonal relationship skill (79%) was the most preferred life skills by rural girls. The least preferred life skill by urban girls was self awareness skill and empathy skill (37%) while for rural girls; critical thinking skill (20%) was the least preferred skill. Table 2 shows chi square value for urban girls VS rural girls is 34.3 which is much greater than table value of χ^2 i.e. 15.51. Thus, the null hypothesis no.1 and 2 were rejected.

Gender based analysis - Figure 2 exhibits that urban girls have shown little higher preference for interpersonal, communication and stress management skills than urban boys while urban boys were little higher in their preference for assertive, critical, problem solving and decision making skills. Table 2 shows

Table 2
Contingency table showing life skills preferences based on Situational Test

S. No	Life Skills	Locality based Analysis								Gender based Analysis											
		Urban Boys Vs Rural Boys				Urban Girls Vs Rural Girls				Urban Boys Vs Urban Girls				Rural Boys Vs Rural Girls							
		Expected Freq. & Total chi-square				Expected Freq. & Total chi-square				Expected Freq. & Total chi-square				Expected Freq. & Total chi-square							
		OUB	OUG	ORB	ORG	%UB	%UG	%RB	%RG	EURb	ERur	Σx2	EURb	ERur	Σx2	EBoy	EGirl	Σx2	EBoy	EGirl	Σx2
1	Stress Management Skill	65	69	33	41	63	68	33	43	53	45	6.33	58	52	4.67	68	66	0.23	37	37	0.68
2	Self Awareness Skill	40	38	38	28	39	37	38	29	42	36	0.18	35	31	0.70	39	39	0.01	33	33	1.77
3	Communication Skill	50	60	43	65	49	59	43	68	50	43	0.00	66	59	0.99	56	54	1.17	53	55	3.96
4	Empathy Skill	28	38	48	66	27	37	48	69	41	35	8.63	55	49	10.5	33	33	1.77	56	58	2.42
5	Interpersonal relationship Skill	52	62	65	75	50	61	65	79	63	54	3.99	72	65	2.83	58	56	1.13	69	71	0.49
6	Assertiveness Skill	53	45	33	23	51	44	33	24	46	40	2.20	36	32	5.15	50	48	0.47	28	28	2.04
7	Problem Solving Skill	70	50	60	59	68	49	60	62	70	60	0.00	57	52	1.88	61	59	2.87	59	60	0.05
8	Critical Thinking Skill	46	41	27	19	45	40	27	20	39	34	2.57	31	29	6.08	44	43	0.18	23	23	1.60
9	Decision Making Skill	59	49	53	34	57	48	53	36	60	52	0.04	44	39	1.45	55	53	0.70	43	44	4.63
		463	452	400	410							24.0			34.3			8.5			17.6

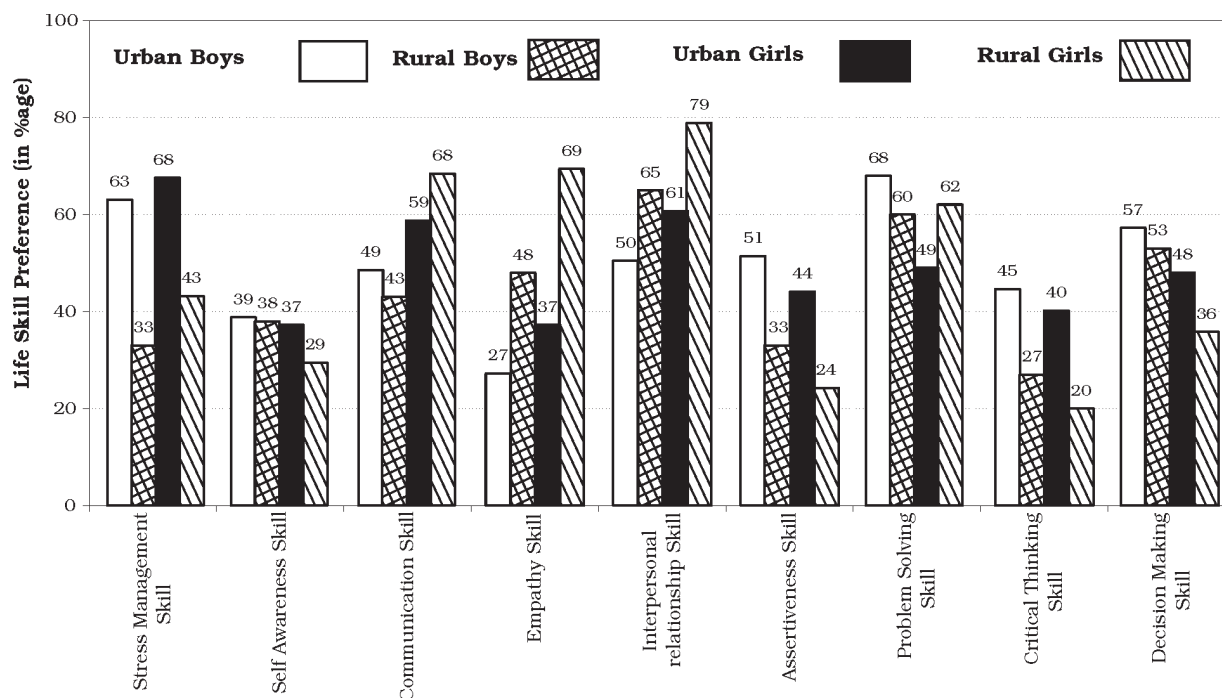


Figure 2 : Life skills Preferences of Urban and Rural Students based on situational test

chi-square values for the statistical significance of the differences in life skills preferences of urban boys Vs urban girls is 8.5, which is much smaller than table value of χ^2 for 8 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance i.e. 15.51 thus the null hypothesis no.3 was accepted. In case of rural boys Vs rural girls, both have shown highest preference for interpersonal skill (65% and 79% respectively) while least preference for critical thinking skill (27% and 20% respectively). In case of rural boys Vs rural girls, the chi-square value was calculated to be 17.6 which are much greater than the table value of 15.51. Thus, the null hypothesis no. 4 was rejected. Girls from both urban and rural locality have shown high preference for interpersonal and communication skill in comparison to boys.

(b) Analysis and interpretation of data from preference sheet

Locality based analysis - Figure 3 exhibits that most preferred life skill by urban boys was problem solving skill (71%) while interpersonal relationship skill (68%) was the most preferred life skills by rural boys. The least preferred life skill by urban boys was empathy (30%) while for rural boys; critical thinking skill (30%) was the least preferred skill. Table 3 shows chi-square value for the statistical significance of the differences in life skills preferences of urban boys VS rural boys as 23.2 which is much greater than table value of χ^2 for 8 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance i.e. 15.51, thus the null hypothesis no.1 was rejected.

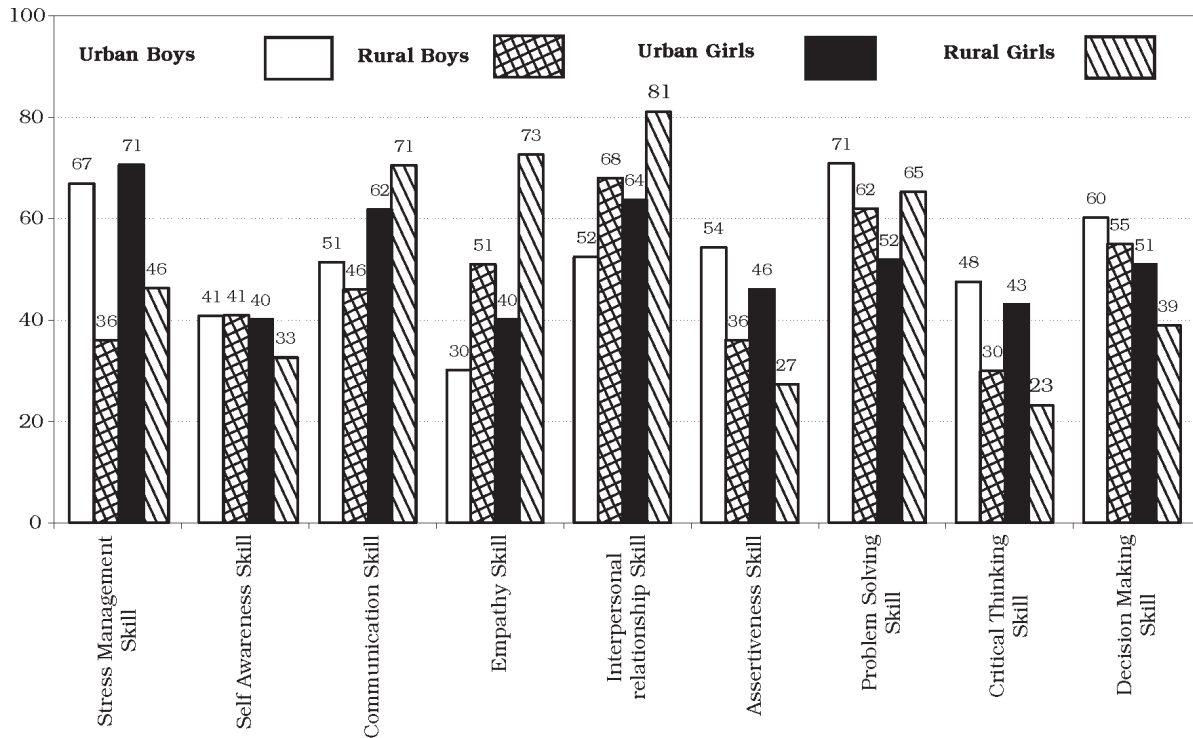


Figure 3 : Contingency table showing life skills preferences based on Preference Test

Similarly, In case of urban girls Vs rural girls, the most preferred life skill by urban girls was stress management skill (71%) while interpersonal relationship skill (81%) was the most preferred life skills by rural girls. The least preferred life skill by urban girls was self awareness skill and empathy skill (40%) while for rural girls; critical thinking skill (23%) was the least preferred skill. Table No.-03 shows chi square value for urban girls Vs rural girls is 31.1 which is much greater than table value of χ^2 i.e. 15.51. Thus, the null hypothesis no.1 and 2 were rejected.

Gender based analysis – Figure 3 exhibits that urban girls have shown little higher preference for interpersonal, communication and stress management

skills than urban boys while urban boys were higher in their preference for assertive, critical, problem solving and decision making skills. Table 3 shows chi-square values for the statistical significance of the differences in life skills preferences of urban boys VS urban girls is 8.3 which is much smaller than table value of χ^2 for 8 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance i.e. 15.51 thus the null hypothesis no.3 was accepted. In case of rural boys Vs rural girls, both have shown highest preference for interpersonal skill while least preference for critical thinking skill. The chi-square value was calculated to be 15.6 which were greater than the table value of 15.51. Thus, the null hypothesis no. 4 was rejected.

Table 3
Contingency table showing life skills preferences based on Preference Test

S. No	Life Skills	Locality based Analysis										Gender based Analysis									
		Urban Boys Vs Rural Boys					Urban Girls Vs Rural Girls					Urban Boys Vs Urban Girls			Rural Boys Vs Rural Girls						
		Observed Frequency		%age of Frequency			Expected Freq. & Total chi-square		Expected Freq. & Total chi-square		Expected Freq. & Total chi-square		Expected Freq. & Total chi-square		Expected Freq. & Total chi-square						
OUB	OUG	ORB	ORG	%UB	%UG	%RB	%RG	EUrb	ERur	Σx^2	EBoy	EGirl	Σx^2	EBoy	EGirl	Σx^2					
1	Stress Management Skill	69	72	36	44	67	71	36	46	56	49	6.30	61	55	4.39	71	70	0.15	40	40	0.62
2	Self Awareness Skill	42	41	41	31	41	40	41	33	44	39	0.28	38	34	0.61	42	41	0.00	36	36	1.63
3	Communication Skill	53	63	46	67	51	62	46	71	53	46	0.00	68	62	0.79	59	57	1.10	56	57	3.43
4	Empathy Skill	31	41	51	69	30	40	51	73	44	38	8.12	58	52	10.0	36	36	1.63	59	61	2.30
5	Interpersonal relationship Skill	54	65	68	77	52	64	68	81	65	57	4.19	74	68	2.46	60	59	1.28	72	73	0.37
6	Assertiveness Skill	56	47	36	26	54	46	36	27	49	43	2.01	38	35	4.23	52	51	0.60	31	31	1.85
7	Problem Solving Skill	73	53	62	62	71	52	62	65	72	63	0.02	60	55	1.81	64	62	2.74	61	63	0.02
8	Critical Thinking Skill	49	44	30	22	48	43	30	23	42	37	2.31	35	31	5.42	47	46	0.17	26	26	1.42
9	Decision Making Skill	62	52	55	37	60	51	55	39	63	54	0.01	47	42	1.32	58	56	0.66	45	47	3.95
		489	478	425	435							23.2			31.1			8.3			15.6

Table 4

S. No.	Life Skills	Correlation coefficient of test scores of urban boys				Correlation coefficient of test scores for urban girls			
		Order of Preference based on questioner no. 1 (R1)	Order of Preference based on questioner no. 2 (R2)	Rank difference D= R1 - R2	D2	Order of Preference based on questioner no. 1 (R1)	Order of Preference based on questioner no. 2 (R2)	Rank Difference D= R1 - R2	D2
1	Stress Management Skill	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	0
2	Self Awareness Skill	8	8	0	0	8	8	0	0
3	Communication Skill	6	6	0	0	3	3	0	0
4	Empathy Skill	9	9	0	0	8	8	0	0
5	Interpersonal relationship Skill	5	5	0	0	2	2	0	0
6	Assertiveness Skill	4	4	0	0	6	6	0	0
7	Problem Solving Skill	1	1	0	0	4	4	0	0
8	Critical Thinking Skill	7	7	0	0	7	7	0	0
9	Decision Making Skill	3	3	0	0	5	5	0	0
n=09					∑ D2 =0	∑ D2 =0			
Rank correlation coefficient (ρ) = $1 - \frac{6\sum D^2}{n(n^2-1)}$, ρ Calculated =1.0 for urban boys & ρ Calculated =1.0 for urban girls									

Table 5

S. No.	Life Skills	Correlation coefficient of test scores of rural boys				Correlation coefficient of test scores of rural girls			
		Order of Preference based on questioner no. 1 (R1)	Order of Preference based on questioner no. 2 (R2)	Rank difference D= R1 - R2	D2	Order of Preference based on questioner no. 1 (R1)	Order of Preference based on questioner no. 2 (R2)	Rank Difference D= R1 - R2	D2
1	Stress Management Skill	7	7	0	0	5	5	0	0
2	Self Awareness Skill	6	6	0	0	7	7	0	0
3	Communication Skill	5	5	0	0	3	3	0	0
4	Empathy Skill	4	4	0	0	2	2	0	0
5	Interpersonal relationship Skill	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0

6	Assertiveness Skill	7	7	0	0	8	8	0	0
7	Problem Solving Skill	2	2	0	0	4	4	0	0
8	Critical Thinking Skill	8	8	0	0	9	9	0	0
9	Decision Making Skill	3	3	0	0	6	6	0	0
n=09					$\sum D^2 = 0$	$\sum D^2 = 0$			
Rank correlation coefficient ($\rho = 1 - \frac{6\sum D^2}{n(n^2-1)}$), ρ Calculated = 1.0 for rural boys & ρ Calculated = 1.0 for rural girls									

(b) **Reliability Analysis:** Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient of the two scores was computed urban boys, urban girls, rural boys and rural girls indicate a substantial positive correlation between the test scores (see tables 4 and 5).

Testing the significance of (ρ) value: As the n is less than 30, distribution of (ρ) is not normal. Therefore, Spearman Rank significance table was used to determine the significance of relationship. When looked up on the Spearman Rank

significance table in row for n= 9 and the column for a significance level of 0.05, the critical value of Spearman’s rank correlation for combined areas in both tails was found to be ± 0.6833 i.e., the upper limit of the acceptance region is 0.6833 and the lower limit of the acceptance region is -0.6833 . The calculated (ρ) = 1.0 is outside the limits of acceptance region as shown in the fig. no. 4. It was concluded that there is a strong positive correlation in the above two sets of ranked data.

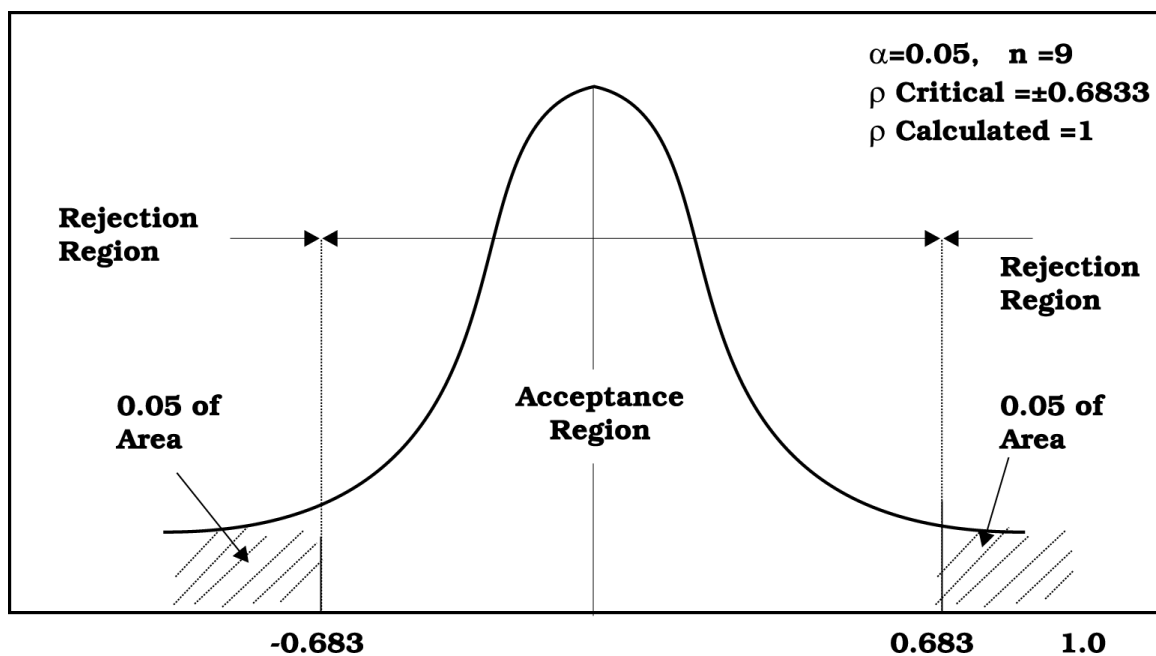


Figure 4 : Acceptance and Rejection regions of a two- tailed test

Conclusions Drawn From Situational Test and Preference Sheet

Results of both the questionnaires were similar. Null hypotheses no.1, 2 and 4 tested through situational test and Preference sheet were rejected while null hypotheses no.3 was accepted leading to following conclusions:

- Ho1. was rejected, so it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the life skills preferences of urban boys and rural boys at higher secondary level.
- Ho2. was rejected, so it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the life skills preferences of urban girls and rural girls at higher secondary level.
- Ho3. was accepted, so it is concluded that there is a no significant difference between the life skills preferences of urban boys and urban girls at higher secondary level.
- Ho4. was rejected, so it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the life skills preferences of rural boys and rural girls at higher secondary level.

Results and Discussion

- Preferences shown for interpersonal relationship skills were very high and almost same irrespective of student's locality or gender. These variables seemed to have no important effect on interpersonal skills preferences of the respondents. These results indicate that it is important for adolescents to establish and maintain good interpersonal relationships. This is similar to the findings of (Camilla Hakelind,

2007; Buhrmester, 1990; Brown, 1989; Coleman, 1980; Douvan and Adelson, 1966; Buhrmester and Furman, 1985; Collins and Laursen 1994). Adolescents develop friendships to meet their intimacy needs and to establish their identity (e.g., mutual empathy love, and security). Thus an important issue for the adolescents, then, would seem to be how to make this interpersonal functioning positive and successful. That may be the reason why all groups of adolescents have preferred this skill.

- Rural students, both boys and girls have shown very less preference for critical thinking skills and assertive skills and rural girls were even much lower in their preference for these skills. Reason may be attributed to their upbringing in the rural environment where they cannot think critically about most of the important issues that affect their lives, and have developed a habit of readily accepting opinions or speculations about nature, people, societies, and nations that have not been adequately tested. Girls reared in the conservative rural society are too meek and submissive to develop into a critical thinker or assertive person. This may also be the reason why rural girls in Rajasthan are lowest in their preference for decision making skills as they are not independent thinkers and consider that it is culturally and traditionally more appropriate to have the parents decide their major life events for them.

- Rural boys and girls have shown comparatively high preference for empathy skills in comparison to urban students. Reason may be attributed to their upbringing in a less stressful and simple rural life. As rural society is collectivistic society based on mutual interdependence, loyalty and cooperation, rural students are more likely to internalise altruistic values and they tend to be more empathic. That may be why they have preferred this skill. While urban areas have high population density, cultural heterogeneity and highly competitive fast modern life. In the fast pace of an urban life, people are left with little time and energy to spend on and with others. They develop tendencies of being reserved and less empathic.
- Urban students both boys have shown higher preference for stress management skills, assertive skills, communication skills and problem solving skills than rural students. As Baum and Paulus (1987) points out, individuals in urban areas often experience stress because they feel they don't have enough control over their environment due to the high frequency of unwanted interactions with other's assertive skills, communication skills. The social crowding and unsolicited social contact can be such prevalent aspects of individual lives in urban areas, individuals may respond to these pressures by communicating assertively in an effort to set boundaries with others or to get their wants and need met.

This may be the reason why urban students may feel they have to be more assertive and communicative as they are members of a highly diverse population, and they are faced with interacting with many people whom they perceive to be very different from them. Same may be the possible reason why urban students have largely preferred problem solving skills as they have to encounter more personal and interpersonal problems. On the contrary, rural areas are more homogeneous, with cultural similarities between individuals. Less stressful and simple rural life has less potential for disagreement and conflict. This means they do not often engage in assertive behavior and are less fort right about how they truly feel. Perhaps this may be why rural students preferred the above skills less as they don't need to use these too often.

- Girls from both rural and urban locality have shown high preference for interpersonal skills and communication skills. These results are in line with many other research findings. One of the most important gender differences in adolescents involves the amount of emphasis placed on interpersonal relationships. Such relationships, especially those that are more intimate, are more salient in the lives of adolescent girls than in those of adolescent boys (Bakan, 1966; Buhrmester and Furman, 1987; Bush and Simmons, 1987; Richards et al., 1990). Females establish this intimacy through

- conversation and self-disclosure (McNelles and Connolly, 1999). Raffaelli and Duckett, (1989) found that females devoted substantially more time than did males to conversation. Friends were the conversational companions of girls significantly more than of boys. It has often been suggested that the emphasis of females on close interpersonal ties and verbal communication might have grown out of an effort to compensate for a lack of power, relative to males, in societal, community, and family social structures (Thorne and Henley, 1975).
- Girls of both urban and rural locality have shown less preference for assertive skills than boys. This shows that boys are more assertive than girl. Boys tend to be more assertive because they are considered to be having a strong and thoughtful personality. So our society not only accepts but also supports males to be assertive. A research by Bourke R.(2001) also showed same results, according to which men are more assertive and women are more tender minded and hence there is gender difference in self-assertiveness. Also males are more assertive because of certain patterns of society. On the other hand our society does not give space to women to show their assertiveness. People expect women to behave unassertively. Women may also avoid behaviours that do not fit “the feminine role” and when they do engage in “masculine assertiveness” they are

likely to encounter disbelief or even hostility from others.

- Girls preference for stress management skill was little higher than boys as they experience more stress compared to the male students. This might be due to the fact that male students reach maturity later than female students while female students tend to be more emotional and sensitive toward what is happening in their surrounding. These things are also the contributor of more stress in female students. This is similar to the findings of (Azizi, Jaafar, Shahrin dan Yusof, 2006).

Educational Implications

Life skills preferences of higher secondary student identified above would be helpful to get the preliminary idea of those life skills that should be integrated with top priority into the existing curriculum of secondary education. The findings would help policymakers and curriculum developers to design a life skill based curriculum based on learner’s priorities as reflected in this study. Life skills in which adolescents express disinterest should be re-evaluated for inclusion in the school curriculum .Serious efforts should be made to develop more innovative strategies to inculcate less preferred life skills so as to create student’s interest and disposition for them.

Towards this end, life skills education can be designed to be spread across the curriculum, to be a separate subject, to be integrated into an existing subject, or a mix of all of these. Government need to support research,

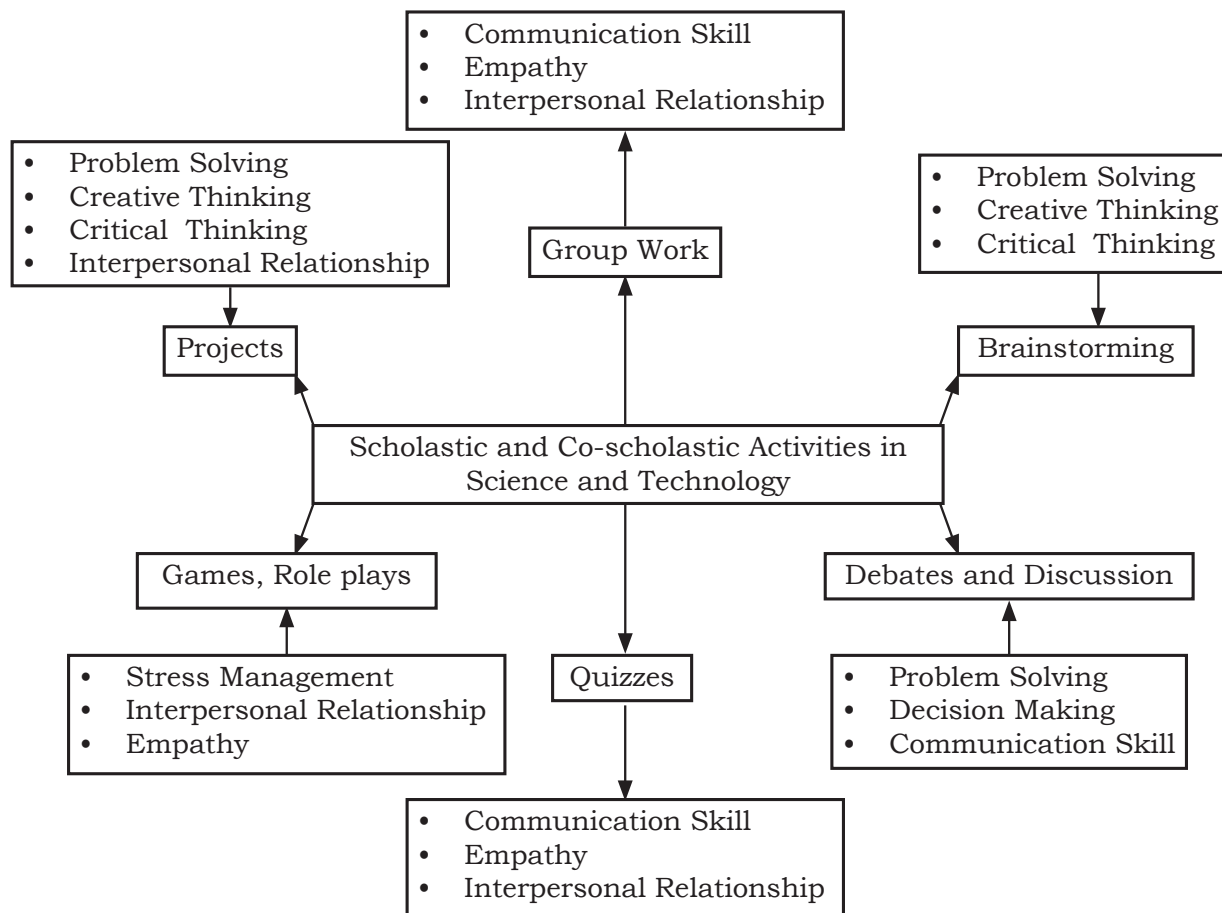


Figure 5 : Chart of Scholastic and Co-scholastic activities to facilitate life skills development

seminars and debate, nationally and regionally, on ways of strengthening life skills education. Teachers need to move beyond lecturing to create a stimulating learning environment as life skills learning cannot be facilitated on the basis of information or discussion alone. Development of all the life skills examined in the study can be facilitated through proper planning of scholastic and co-scholastic activities in teaching-learning situations.(Fig. 5)

Integrating life skills in academic subjects does not require expanding the curriculum, but it does require a formal instruction programme in a well structured classroom time

table, in order to sublimate the usual complaints of burdensome course of study in the schools. There is a need to train teachers in how to put them across a content matter, how to monitor learners growth in these areas and in the underlying theory and methodology of life skill education. A more conscious and deliberate effort to promote life skills will empower learners and lead to development of more active citizens in the life of society. However, as with any new concept and method, it takes time for people to adapt, perhaps several years, for the curriculum to be revised and implemented correctly.

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