EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a critical stage of growth and development and marks a period of changeover from childhood to adulthood. This period has wide ranged scope and perspective. It is marked by rapid physiological changes and psychosocial maturation. A lot of biological and physical changes occur during this period. Also on the emotional side, we find them being persuaded by peers and friends.

An adolescent grows capable of thinking, better verbalization and starts developing an independent ideology. These issues need to be handled carefully and which of these aspects assumes controlling proportions in life depends on the help and guidance received from parents, teachers and peers. Thus it can be called the cross road in one’s life and lays the foundation for a successful career and productive life.

The key issues of adolescents revolve around the following, managing emotions; effective communication; interpersonal relationship; resisting peer pressure, building relationship and a strong need for identity.

Adolescence is also a period of cognitive development. They become capable of reasoning in a wider perspective. The deliberations, perceptions and ideas developed during this period of life influences one’s life in future and plays a major role in character and personality formation. Higher order cognitive process such as decision making, reasoning, critical thinking and thinking creatively become powerful during this period. They develop an increased ability to construct new combinations. Astuteness or capacity for insight and reasoning increases during this period. The need to feel significant and having social acceptance gains significance during this transition period. Self concept and self esteem gain significance in the process of identity development. Relationship also undergoes marked changes during this period.

Peers are important during this period and the time spent with them spectacularly increases.

Development of sexuality is an important facet in the development of an adolescent. Adolescents strive for independence during this period. It could be emotional autonomy, behavioral autonomy or cognitive autonomy. During this developmental
period they face a number of issues, which have to be resolved to enable them to become responsible, contributing members of the society.

Most of the issues of adolescents are due to failure in understanding the changes they are undergoing. The key areas of concern related to these growing years are issues related to –

a) **Identity crisis**  
b) **Managing emotions**  
c) **Peer pressures**  
d) **Interpersonal communication**  
e) **Decision making**  
f) **Goal setting**  
g) **Stress which could be external or internal**  
h) **Problem solving**  
i) **Emotional issues and**  
j) **Health issues**

Most of the issues are perceptional and good guidance can solve most of the problems. Life skills help adolescents deal effectively with real life situations and also help them overcome anxiety, confusion and mental turmoil that they go through. Life skills are non-academic abilities, wisdom, approach and behavior necessary for successful living and improving one’s quality of life. Possessing life skills facilitate adolescents to deal with life’s inevitable difficulties and hardships more efficiently. 

The inability to tackle emotional pain, disappointments, discord, anxieties or deal with peer pressure, monotony, revolt and inquisitiveness leads them to high risk behavior like alcoholism and drug abuse. Life skill training helps these youngsters to take control and behave sensibly. It enables them to translate knowledge, attitude and morals into actual abilities.
The ten core life skills as defined by UNO are
i) Self awareness
ii) Empathy
iii) Problem solving
iv) Decision making
v) Creative thinking
vi) Critical thinking
vii) Interpersonal relationship
viii) Effective communication
ix) Managing emotion
x) Coping with stress

All these skills are mutually-dependent and cannot stand alone. These skills strengthen each other and help the adolescents build self worth, self esteem and help them foster holistic self development.

Life skills create individuals, who are capable of translating wisdom, outlook and values into healthy behavior. It also helps them build self reliance and take decisions effectively. It also helps in humanizing interpersonal skills to establish healthy relationships. So the need for life skill training in individuals can be accepted without question.

Business organizations are perceptible entities. They are given a form by human beings. The quality of an organization depends on its vision, ethical standard and perspective of looking at things. So corporate are seen to have empathy, conviction, dedication and also a certain amount of sensitivity. These characters are a pre-requisite for excellence; and it is these characteristic and life skills those business organization looks for when they track managers. Since the collective decision of these managers will profoundly influence lives and events around the world, it is absolutely essential to focus on development of life skills, by imparting the precise training at the right time.

- Managerial skills that includes:
  - Communication skills
  - People skills
  - Ethical values
  - Decision making skills
Professional skills
Since life skills teach us all these it is important that we focus on them and make a good and effective person out of young adolescence. This training is imperative and gets translated into individuals who understand and execute their responsibilities to the core and make unmatched managerial competence. Soon cannot ignore the need for imparting good life skills to adolescents. The adolescents of today are going to be managers of tomorrow. So there is a close link between life skills and effective managers.

Research Gap- Life skill learning is indispensable and its need in holistic approach to education which cannot be disputed. Bender and Lombard (2004:101) expressly advocated that adolescents should be asked to identify their skill preferences.

A lot of research has been successfully conducted in this area in the American sub-continent and also in Africa, but very little research has been done in the Indian sub-continent. It is important to remember that life skill are not static and disparities in social and economic backgrounds along with international cultural variations play an important role in deciding the required life skills in that region. Knowing that very little has been done in the Indian sub-continent undertaking a thorough study in Mumbai Region, a cosmopolitan metro and the commercial capital of India.

Scope for the study- The scope of the study includes:
- To address adolescent behavior in schools and colleges in the city of Mumbai and to determine their response to the various skill requirements and coping mechanism by asking them their preferences.
- To encourage them to assume ownership of the curriculum and their behavior.
- To determine if the preferences of life skills by adolescents vary according to their gender, socio-economic status and age.

Objective of research- The objectives of the study are classified into two, viz. primary and secondary. The primary objective of the study aims to study life skill preferences of adolescents in the city of Mumbai.

The secondary objective of the study includes:
a. To rank the life skill needs of the target group according to their preferences and differences.
b. To identify whether the present curriculum satisfactorily reflects the preferences of the learners.
c. To determine whether life skill preferences vary according to gender and economic status...

**Hypothesis:**

The study shall be based on the following hypothesis.

**Null hypothesis (H 01):**

It is essential to determine life skill preferences of adolescents.

**Alternate hypothesis (H 11):**

It is not essential to determine life skill preferences of adolescents.

**Null hypothesis (H02):**

The present curriculum reflects the life skill preferences of adolescents

**Alternate hypothesis (H 12):**

The present curriculum does not reflect the life skill preferences of adolescents.

**Null Hypothesis (H03):**

Life skill preferences in adolescents vary according to their socio-economic conditions.

**Alternate Hypothesis (H 13):**

Life skill preferences in adolescents do not vary according to their socio-economic conditions.
Null Hypothesis (H 04):
Life Skill preference in adolescents do not vary according to age.

Alternate Hypothesis (H 14):
Life Skill preference in adolescents vary according to age.

Null Hypothesis (H 05):
Life Skill preferences in adolescents vary according to gender.

Alternate Hypothesis (H 15):
Life Skill preference in adolescents do not vary according to gender.

Null Hypothesis (H 06):
Adolescents are capable of identifying their life skill preferences.

Alternate Hypothesis (H 16):
Adolescents are not capable of identifying their life skill preferences.

Null Hypothesis (H 07):
Adolescents are strong in interpersonal relationships and prioritize it highly.

Alternate Hypothesis (H17):
Adolescents are not strong in Interpersonal relationships and do not prioritize it highly.
Research Methodology:

Sources of Data

The research was carried out with the help of primary and secondary data. Primary data – An empirical investigation was conducted and survey research method was employed. A closed questionnaire, based on through study of literature on adolescent life skill is compiled to determine the life skill preferences of adolescents in Mumbai.

Secondary data — Secondary sources include published data, articles, research papers and books on the subject.

Research Design

The problem dealt with in this research was to determine the responses of adolescents to the various Life Skill requirements and coping mechanism by asking them their preferences.

Descriptive research design was utilized since the study is concerned with describing the characteristics of different individuals and groups of individuals.

Using a closed questionnaire an initial pilot study was conducted by distributing the questionnaires to a hundred respondents in the said area and analyzing their responses.

Changes were not needed in the questionnaire before conducting the final study. An initial pilot study was conducted by distributing the questionnaires to 100 respondents in the area and analyzing their responses.

Research Area

School and College students from Mumbai constituted the target group after explaining the objective of the research to them.

Sample size

The sample was drawn from adolescents, from both genders and various economic strata in the city of Mumbai. Lady and Ormond (2001:224) suggest that when a
population exceeds 5,000, a sample of 400 is representative. There is an excess of 5,000 adolescents in the city of Mumbai.

**Sampling Technique**

The Technique used to develop the scales for the sampling was Arbitrary Approach where the scale will be developed on ad hoc basis.

Summated scales or Likert type scales was developed by utilizing the item analysis approach where in a particular item is evaluated on the basis of how well it discriminates between those persons whose total score is high and those whose is low.

**Analysis of Data**

After conducting a pilot study the acceptability, validity and reliability was tested. While testing reliability the pilot group was asked to complete the questionnaire. After testing the Reliability of the pilot group the questionnaire was administered to all the respondents’ analysis. (SPSS) 20, software package for questionnaire survey was used for further analysis.

Bivariate analysis using Means, T-test, ANOVA, and Non parametric tests like Mann Whitney tests and Kruskal-Wallis Tests was used. Correlation was used to identify the trends and possible associations between one variable and the other.

**10 Limitations of study:**

The study suffers from the following limitations.

a) The questionnaire was administered to around 500 respondents, who included adolescents in the city of Mumbai. The sample size was thus a limitation.
b) The questionnaire was administered only to school and college students, hence the views of non school going adolescents were not considered.
c) The responses has an element of subjectivity like every other research under social science.
d) The relevance of the suggested measures will depend on the seriousness with which these are implemented.
e) Considering that the concentration span of adolescents is not too much, all life skills have not been considered while preparing the questionnaire.
FINDINGS:

During the survey & data collection some useful insight were obtained. Some of the important findings are summarized as follows:

1. **The need to determine life skill preferences of adolescents.**

   The research has clearly shown that the opinion of the adolescents, who are also students in various colleges in Mumbai, is important and essential. In order for this learning area to be valued by students, they should be consulted to determine their life skill needs. If the curriculum were to become more aligned to the adolescents’ specific needs (by taking their input), it would probably encourage the students to assume ownership of the curriculum. Therefore the cognizance of the adolescents should be taken.

2. **The reflection of present curriculum on the life skill preferences of adolescents.**

   The research shows that the national and state curriculum has integrated life skills for adolescence. Since life skills are generic by nature, an educational intervention aimed at development of ability to apply them has been designed and operationalized differently for different contests. Relevant and age appreciate contents have been focused on. Care has been taken to see that the learner is no longer a passive recipient of information but an active participant. Their views have also been taken in to consideration.

   The statistical data further showed that these adolescents more than 50% of the respondents exhibited a skill score of above 76% and none of the respondents exhibited scores below 25%. Since these respondents have already been exposed to this integrated curriculum in their schools. A few skills like social interaction and maintaining interpersonal relationships have found to prioritized low which needs to be addressed seriously.
3. Impact of the socio-economic status on the life skill preferences of adolescents:

The research showed that there was a significant difference in the life skill preference adolescents across the three socio-economic strata. The respondents from the lower SES which comprised about 41.80% of the total respondents scored a mean of 72.2374 which was much lower than the 80.5075 scored by the 156 (29.90%) respondents from the higher SES. The respondents from the middle SES scored a mean of 77.743 in their total skill scores. Thus it is clearly seen that students/adolescents from different SES differed in their skill scores. Higher the SES, higher the skill scores.

4. Impact of the age on the life skill preferences of adolescents:

The research showed that there was no significant difference in the total skill score preferences of adolescents of different ages, ranging from 14 years to 19 years. The mean scores hardly showed any difference across ages. The non-parametric correlations showed r=0.016, sig (1 tailed) was 0.360 which showed that skill score preferences are not significantly correlated with age. The research hence shows that age does not impact life skill preferences of adolescents, probably because these skill get establishes at a lower age, which makes it all the more important to train students in school itself.

6. Impact of gender on the life skill preferences of adolescents:

The research showed that there was a significant difference in the life skill preferences of male and female adolescent students. Asymp. Sig. (2 tailed) value was p=0.016 which is < 0.05, shows that there is a significant difference in the life skill preferences of males and females. The research further shows that females have a higher skill score than males.

7. Identification of life skill preferences by adolescents:

The research showed that adolescents are capable of identifying their life skill preferences. All the core life skills have been covered in the questionnaire and the correlation ranged from 0.271 to 0.460. Statistically when the correlation is above 0.2, the question /skill is accepted. This correlation table proves that adolescents are capable of identifying the life skill preferences.
Hence it becomes all the more essential to consult them while determining their life orientation needs. (Bender & Lombard 2004:101). A cognizance of the adolescent opinion while framing curriculum or preparing presentation and preparing educational interventions will enable an appropriate understanding of the conceptual framework of adolescence education.

8. Importance of interpersonal relationships for adolescents.

The research showed that this life skill was least preferred by adolescents. Both the pilot and final analysis showed exactly similar results, where skills that help you cope with rejection with SD of 0.871 and skills for socialization with a SD of 0.868 were last on the preference list. Across all SES and gender the preferences remained similar which probably makes it important to address this serious implication on priority.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Developing life skills help individuals translate knowledge, attitude and values into healthy behavior. It also helps them build self confidence and take decision effectively. Life skills also help in improving their interpersonal skills to establish healthy relationship in life. It also helps in moulding capable adults who will eventually become effective leaders.

From the finding it is clear that there is a need to introduce life skills training to adolescents, by taking their preferences in to consideration. Keeping this in the background, this research highlights the following recommendations.

There is urgent need to consider the opinion of adolescents, while introducing life skills interventions to them. The opinion of the respondents, who are students of various schools and colleges in Mumbai, exhibits a very metro character in their preferences. So it is essential to take in to consideration the preferences of semi-urban and rural counterparts while introducing life skills to adolescents. Life skill education should be more practical oriented, using training modules, rather than have only theory based lectures. The preferences of street children and middle school dropouts also should be taken in to account, while preparing these interventions. These non-school going adolescents should also be given training session in life skills.
The curriculum needs to focus on certain aspects more. The areas of substance abuse and prevention of HIV/AIDS needs to be adequately covered. Interpersonal relationships have to be focused upon in a holistic manner.

From the findings it is clear that adolescents are affected by socio-economic disparities prevailing in the country. Adolescents belonging to the lower SES are seen to have low level of life skills. They tend to develop high risk behavior, which ultimately leads to long lasting health and social consequences. Children raised in poverty are faced daily with overwhelming challenge and face emotional and social instability.

They require healthy learning and exploration for optimal brain development. Strong, secure relationship helps stabilize children’s behavior, which adolescents from lower SES lack. Hence they generally end up with low life skill scores. It is strongly recommended that these life skills are introduced early years of schooling, so that they get comfortable with the life skills and avoid dropping out of school. It is recommended to create a familial atmosphere in class and make the schooling atmosphere more inclusive. The best staff has to be engaged to address this issue. If we aim at making their lives more enriched with balanced, positive and sustained learning environment, it will change this existing equation in the years to come.

Another area that needs further reconsideration is difference in life skill scores between genders. Females exhibits higher life skills score than males. This problem seems to stem from homes, where a male child is given special preferences over a female child. In our Indian society, where paternal lineage is followed, we have failed to recognize that this gender bias has held to lowering of life skill scores of male, which is a distinct disadvantage to the society in general. It is recommended that the male and female children be treated equally. Since this difference is nominal; there is no need to introduce special training programmes for the male child. It is recommended that further research be taken up on this topic, because there is a definite paucity of development research in area.

Since adolescents are capable of identifying life skills preferences and prioritising them, it is recommended that a cognizance of their opinion be considered while preparing the curriculum. The skills that help them cope with rejection have been prioritized the lowest. This means that when they are rejected for them the only way
out is suicide. With the suicide rates of adolescents raising everyday and they are loudly and clearly telling us that they do not want to cope with rejection. It becomes very important to address this issue. The curriculum developers and policy makers should take this as a warning signal and make the curriculum sensitive to this issue.

A nationwide survey should be considered to ascertain, if the entire country has similar needs. The need of the adolescents in the country should be surveyed at regular intervals in order to assess the relevance of life skill training. Considering the unique character and life style setting of India, the life skill training programmes should address this problem and equip learners with the required skills to meet and resolve these challenges successfully.

Additional skills like environment education, goal setting, study methods, coping with grief needs to be included. Skills where adolescents expressed disinterest should be re-evaluated for inclusion in the curriculum.

It is alarming to note that the adolescents of today across all SES, age and gender do not give importance to interpersonal relationships. They seem to have become selfish and self centered. Whereas they prefer decision making and self awareness, interpersonal relationship seems to be losing significance. It is absolutely essential to address this problem and instill this life skill into these young adults. It is recommended that workshop and seminars be introduced at school level as well as college level. Also parents, counselors and teachers take up this individually and on priority.
FUTURE RESEARCH

Since this study was taken up only in the city of Mumbai, it is suggest that a similar study be undertaken in other parts of the country, where other metros and rural part are also included. A National level research will help in detecting the root of the problem and a decision in this regard will help in tackling this problem at the grass root level.

Also a thorough research of each Life Skill separately, considering one skill at a time, is suggested, to obtain a clear picture of the problem.