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Research paper

Impact of Socio-Demographic Variables on Life Skills Among Adolescents in Rural Belt of Anand District, Gujarat

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Abstract

Adolescence plays very crucial role in human development. During this phase rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes takes place. Thus, an adolescent undergo a number of challenges and opportunities that may impact their future well being in both positive or Persons at this age n adverse manner. Therefore, an adolescent need to be treated with utmost care. The acquisition of life skills during adolescence is very significant for holistic development and overall well-being of the individual. The current paper critically examines the association between socio-demographic variable and level of life skills in the rural belt of Anand District, Gujarat. A structured questionnaire was introduced among 383 respondents. To understand the association, chi-square analysis was carried out. In order to find the direction of relation, correlation coefficient test was used. The study reveals association between life skills with socio-demographic variables viz. gender, caste, family type, occupation and education of father and mother along with participation of respondents into various co-curricular activities

Keywords : Life Skills, Adolescents. Socio-demographic variables

1. Introduction

Life skills remain pivotal for self-development and refer to a gamut of abilities that empower individuals to efficiently manage the challenges and demands of daily life which are essential for personal development, maintaining healthy relationships, and achieving success in various life domains.

UNESCO, 2004 defines life skills “in a general way mean a mix of knowledge, behaviour, attitudes and values and designate the possession of some skill and know-how to do something or reach an aim. They include competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, ability to organise, social and communication skills, adaptability, problem solving, ability to co-operate on

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a democratic basis that are needed for actively shaping a peaceful future. There are many different understandings of life skills, but no definition is universally accepted. Life skills defined in a general way mean a mix of knowledge, behaviour, attitudes and values and designate the possession of some skill and know-how to do something or reach an aim. They include competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, ability to organise, social and communication skills, adaptability, problem solving, ability to co-operate on a democratic basis that are needed for actively shaping a peaceful future".

WHO, 2003 defines life skills "are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (WHO definition). In particular, life skills are psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathise with others, and cope with managing their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Life skills may be directed toward personal actions or actions toward others or may be applied to actions that alter the surrounding environment to make it conducive to health".

UNICEF, 2019 defines life skills "as psychosocial and interpersonal skills that are generally considered important referring to a large group of skills that can help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively and develop coping and self-management skills that may help them lead a healthy and productive life".

Adolescents need knowledge and abilities necessary to face the challenges and responsibilities they will face as adults. Developing life skills empowers adolescents to become more independent and self-reliant as they learn to make decisions, solve problems, manage their time effectively, and take care of themselves and their surroundings. Life skills not only foster practical abilities but also promote emotional intelligence, resilience, empathy, and self-awareness. life skills such as communication, critical thinking, and organization are transferable and highly valued in both academic and professional settings which better equipped to excel in school, pursue higher education, and succeed in their future careers. Life skills education plays a significant role in reducing risky behaviors among adolescents, such as substance abuse, unsafe sexual practices, and delinquency. Life skills enable adolescents to effectively navigate social situations, communicate with others, and develop meaningful connections. Life skills are

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essential for building positive peer relationships, resolving conflicts peacefully, and contributing positively to their communities.

2. Review of Literature

Life skills education serves as an enriching programme designed to prepare adolescents with the capabilities necessary to make informed and healthy choices, fostering a purposeful and constructive life. It adds values in themselves, evaluating their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth. It also facilitates effective interpersonal relationships, enabling adolescents to navigate their surroundings and make responsible decisions. (Thakkar K. and Modi K. 2016)

Theories of human development and adolescent behavior emphasize the significance of life skills as crucial components of healthy development and resilience in children. Research indicates that these skills play a mediating role in adolescent behavior. Program evaluations have shown that life skills development can have several positive outcomes, including delaying the onset of drug use, preventing high-risk sexual behaviors, teaching anger management, improving academic performance, and fostering positive social adjustment. (Mangrulkar, Whitman and Posner, 2001)

Theories on experiential learning and pragmatism contribute to the understanding of life skills (Beaudin and Quick, 1995). Studies emphasize learning by doing and problem-solving, and thus stresses on the importance of practical skills that enable individuals to adapt to changing circumstances and effectively engage with their environment. (Dewey, 2017, 2023).

Adolescents also confront situations where decision making remains important and they have to choose from a range of possible alternatives. An individual, social, and environmental conditions of an adolescent influences the choice of the final decision. Thus, psychological well-being of adolescent students impact their mode of decision-making. Psychological well-being of adolescent depend on their level of life skill. Decision-making alife skill directly influence psychological well-being and is defined as the ability to “take responsibility for one's own decisions, taking into account ethical, social and security aspects” (Bisquerra Alzina and Pérez Escoda, 2012).

Glasser’s choice theory, elucidates the importance of personal responsibility and choice in shaping behavior and outcomes. It puts forward the development of decision-making and problem-solving skills as essential for personal fulfillment and well-being. (Siegel, 2000). Further, the choice theory that

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influences decision-making and problem-solving skills as essential for personal fulfillment and well-being has been extended to reduce conflict among adolescents.

Goleman's work on emotional intelligence (EI) encompasses skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills highlights the need of emotional competence in personal and professional success. (Channell, 2021).

3. Objective of the study

Various researchers like **Bhuvaneshwari et al., (2017), Chakra (2016), Hohendroff (2013) and Haji et al**., (2011), Smitha, A., & Thomas, M. V. (2018) have studied the relationships between socio-demographic variables and life skills. Factors such as parental education, socioeconomic status, family structure, and parenting styles can significantly impact the opportunities and resources available for skill acquisition. The socioeconomic status and resources available within the community can also influence life skill development. Cultural norms, values, and expectations can shape the types of life skills that are prioritized and valued within a society. School resources, curriculum content, teaching methodologies, and extracurricular activities also influence the acquisition of life skills. Adolescents may be influenced by the behaviors, values, and attitudes of their peers, which can either facilitate or hinder the development of life skills. Therefore, The present study aimed at understanding the association between level of life skills and socio-demographic variables among adolescents.

4. Method

The present study used descriptive research by involving survey and fact - finding enquiries of different kinds. The sample covers 383 adolescents aged between 13 to 17 years studying in standard 8, 9 and 10 standard in rural belt of Anand District, Gujarat, India. The stratified multistage random sampling method techniques was undertaken where the first state units (FSU) are the Talukas, Second Stage Units (SSU) are the schools and the ultimate stage units (USU) are the students. The SSUs (total schools) are placed/arranged against respective FSUs (Taluka) in an descending order From each of the SSUs 10% of schools are selected Socio-demographic variables for the purpose of study covered age, religion, education, occupation of parents, income of the parents, family type, number of family members, marital status of parents were taken as. A structured questionnaire was adopted for the purpose of primary data collection. The multi-dimensional Life Skills Assessment Scale consisted of 100 items (one hundred only) in the form of statements in-built with a 5-point likert scale for the respondents. It has both direct and reverse items. Necessary modification for the collection of socio-demographic information had been

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made which includes family background, social and economic background of respondents and their parents, participation to co-curricular activities etc.

5. Findings

The finding section dealt with the primary data collected from the respondents. The table has two values where in order to find association chi-square analysis was carried out and in addition, in order to find the direction of relation correlation coefficient test carried out. All ten components of life skills were taken into consideration to understand their association and direction.

Each table represents following terms indicated in it.

CS : Chi square Value

CC : Correlation Coefficient

*** significant at 1 percent level of significance

** significant at 5 percent level of significance

* significant at 10 percent level of significance

Table 1 : Association and direction of relationship between Self-awareness and Socio-demographic variables.

Socio-Demographic Variable (Determinants)	Test Applied	Gender	Caste	Type of Family	Occupation of Father	Occupation of Mother	Education of Father	Education of Mother	Co-curricular Activities
Self Awareness	CS	2.496	28.877***	8.633***	71.872***	36.306***	27.830***	44.770***	19.872***
	CC	-0.067	-0.172	0.172***	0.270***	0.286***	-.133***	0.208***	-0.031

With Chi square Value it is established that there is no significant difference in self-awareness levels between males and females. The correlation coefficient also lacks statistical significance, indicating that gender does not have a significant impact on an individual's level of self-awareness. The correlation coefficient is not significant, indicating that it is not possible to rank self-awareness levels based on caste. The moderate positive correlation coefficient suggests that individuals from nuclear families tend to have higher levels of self-awareness compared to those from joint families. Both the occupation of the father and the occupation of the mother exhibit significant associations with self-awareness. The education level

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of the father demonstrates a statistically significant relationship with self-awareness. The mother's education level exhibits a highly statistically significant relationship with self-awareness.

Table 2 : Association and direction of relationship between Empathy and Socio-demographic variables.

Socio-Demographic Variable (Determinants)	Test Applied	Gender	Caste	Type of Family	Occupation of Father	Occupation of Mother	Education of Father	Education of Mother	Co-curricular Activities
Empathy	CS	4.765*	21.869***	4.166	28.688***	22.577***	16.485***	47.588***	20.338***
	CC	4.765*	21.869***	4.166	28.688***	22.577***	16.485***	47.588***	20.338***

The chi-square value indicates a statistically significant association, although the correlation coefficient reveals a weak and insignificant connection for Gender. When considering caste, the chi-square value demonstrates statistical significance, indicating a strong relationship between caste and empathy. However, the correlation coefficient is insignificant, making it difficult to determine the direction of this relationship. In terms of the type of family, the analysis indicates a lack of, Family structure is found to be statistically insignificant with empathy implying no association between the two supported by the absence of a correlation coefficient. Both the occupation of the father and the occupation of the mother exhibit significant associations with empathy. The impact of education on empathy, the education level of both father and mother show a statistically significant relationship. Co-curricular activities demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with empathy, as indicated by the chi-square value while the negative correlation coefficient underscores this significance.

Table 3 : Association and direction of relationship between Effective Communication and Socio-demographic variables.

Socio-Demographic Variable (Determinants)	Test Applied	Gender	Caste	Type of Family	Occupation of Father	Occupation of Mother	Education of Father	Education of Mother	Co-curricular Activities
Effective communication	CS	3.881	18.485***	5.964**	17.883***	9.767***	13.305***	22.586***	45.747***
	CC	-0.003	-0.177***	0.106**	-0.123	0.155***	0.094*	-0.031	0.257***

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Gender does not have a statistically significant relationship with effective communication among respondents. Chi-square value indicates that caste has a significant association with effective communication. The type of family also demonstrates a statistically significant relationship with effective communication at 5 percent level of significance. a statistically significant association with effective communication is observed with the occupation of a father but the correlation coefficient suggests that the impact of the father's occupation on communication skills is relatively weak. The positive correlation coefficient in mother's occupation is observed along with significant relationship. The positive correlation coefficient for the father's education level suggests that higher levels of education may positively impact effective communication skills. The highly significant relationship between the education of the mother and effective communication, as indicated by the chi-square value, is accompanied by a weak negative correlation coefficient. The high chi-square value indicates that participation in co-curricular activities is associated with enhanced communication abilities among adolescent students. The positive correlation coefficient further reinforces this finding.

Table 4 : Association and direction of relationship between Interpersonal relations and Socio-demographic variables.

Socio-Demographic Variable (Determinants)	Test Applied	Gender	Caste	Type of Family	Occupation of Father	Occupation of Mother	Education of Father	Education of Mother	Co-curricular Activities
Interpersonal Relationship	CS	5.598*	17.086***	5.474*	20.711***	9.747***	52.455***	28.206***	17.805***
	CC	-0.012	0.139***	-0.08	0.166***	0.146***	0.260***	0.268***	-0.023

Gender is found to be statistically significant with interpersonal relationships at 10 percent level of significance. The correlation coefficient is statistically insignificant. The caste variable demonstrates a statistically significant relationship with interpersonal relationships along with positive correlation coefficient. The type of family exhibits a statistically significant association with interpersonal relationships with the negative correlation coefficient. Both the occupation of the father and the occupation of the mother demonstrate highly significant relationships with interpersonal relationships with the positive correlation coefficients. The education levels of both the father and the mother exhibit highly significant relationships with interpersonal relationships with the positive correlation coefficients.

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Co-curricular activities also show a significant association with interpersonal relationships, although the correlation coefficient is statistically insignificant.

Table 5 : Association and direction of relationship between Creative thinking and Socio-demographic variables.

Socio-Demographic Variable (Determinants)	Test Applied	Gender	Caste	Type of Family	Occupation of Father	Occupation of Mother	Education of Father	Education of Mother	Co-curricular Activities
Creative Thinking	CS	8.454**	9.691**	2.346	27.471***	17.910***	42.382***	56.379***	18.423***
	CC	-0.028	0.102**	-0.075	-0.002	0.186***	-0.150***	-0.212***	-0.02

Gender emerges as a significant factor, suggesting that there might be differences in creative thinking patterns between male and female students. Caste displays a noteworthy association with creative thinking. The type of family does not show a significant relationship with creative thinking. The occupation of the father shows a strong association for creative thinking. The education levels of both parents significantly impact creative thinking. Engaging in co-curricular activities also shows a significant relationship with creative thinking.

Table 6 : Association and direction of relationship between Critical thinking and Socio-demographic variables.

Socio-Demographic Variable (Determinants)	Test Applied	Gender	Caste	Type of Family	Occupation of Father	Occupation of Mother	Education of Father	Education of Mother	Co-curricular Activities
Critical Thinking	CS	7.985**	33.209***	8.047**	21.909***	36.224***	58.251***	44.520***	30.797***
	CC	(-0.046)	(0.215***)	(-0.144***)	-0.041	(0.304***)	(-0.198***)	(0.291***)	(-.004)

While the chi-square value signifies the significance of association with gender, the correlation coefficient suggests a weak negative relationship. The determinant of caste demonstrates a highly significant relationship, as indicated by the chi-square value with moderate correlation coefficient. A significant

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relationship with critical thinking is observed with type of family whereas correlation coefficient suggests a moderate negative association. A highly significant relationship with critical thinking is analysed for father's occupation with a weak negative association for correlation coefficient. The chi-square value underscores the significance of the mother's occupation in relation to critical thinking while correlation coefficient suggests a strong positive association. The education level of both father and mother reveals a highly significant relationship however; the correlation coefficient suggests a moderate negative association for father's education. Co-curricular activities demonstrate a highly significant relationship however; the correlation coefficient suggests a weak and negligible association.

Table 7 : Association and direction of relationship between Decision making and Socio-demographic variables.

Socio-Demographic Variable (Determinants)	Test Applied	Gender	Caste	Type of Family	Occupation of Father	Occupation of Mother	Education of Father	Education of Mother	Co-curricular Activities
Decision Making	CS	0.006	14.380***	7.496***	111.297***	18.916***	31.947***	29.210***	26.102***
	CC	-0.003	-0.035	-0.025	0.282***	0.145***	-0.116**	0.107**	-0.013

There is no statistical significance between gender and decision making, indicated by a low chi-square value, similarly, the correlation coefficient suggests a weak and negligible association. Caste demonstrates a highly significant relationship with decision making, as reflected in the chi-square value, however, the correlation coefficient indicates a weak negative association. A significant relationship with decision making is found with type of family, however, the correlation coefficient suggests a weak negative association. A highly significant relationship of father's and mother's occupation with decision making is found. The correlation coefficient for father's occupation indicates a strong positive association and moderate for mother's occupation. The education level of both father and mother exhibits highly significant relationship with decision making, the correlation coefficient indicates a moderate negative association for father and a weak positive association for mother. Co-curricular activities demonstrate a highly significant relationship with decision making.

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Table 8 : Association and direction of relationship between Problem solving and Socio-demographic variables.

Socio-Demographic Variable (Determinants)	Test Applied	Gender	Caste	Type of Family	Occupation of Father	Occupation of Mother	Education of Father	Education of Mother	Co-curricular Activities
Problem Solving	CS	1.25	28.367***	17.201***	44.735***	67.335***	68.416***	61.110***	33.733***
	CC	-0.05	0.139***	-0.059	0.209***	0.393***	-0.252***	-0.23	0.196***

For gender the findings suggest that it has a limited impact on the problem-solving abilities of the respondents. Caste emerges as a significant determinant with a strong association to problem-solving abilities. The type of family structure emerges as a noteworthy factor affecting problem-solving abilities. The occupation of both the father and mother seen as a significant determinant, strongly associated with problem-solving abilities. The findings for both parents' education suggest that higher levels of parental education may have a complex relationship with problem-solving abilities. Participation in co-curricular activities is found to significantly influence problem-solving skills.

Table 9 : Association and direction of relationship between Coping with emotion and Socio-demographic variables.

Socio-Demographic Variable (Determinants)	Test Applied	Gender	Caste	Type of Family	Occupation of Father	Occupation of Mother	Education of Father	Education of Mother	Co-curricular Activities
Coping with Emotions	CS	19.705***	9.579**	2.776	33.460***	33.601***	16.337***	36.916***	9.493**
	CC	-0.212***	0.127***	-0.045	-0.006	-0.144***	-0.065	-0.096*	-0.069

Gender was examined as a determinant, and the results revealed a significant association between gender and coping abilities.. Caste emerged as another determinant significantly related to coping with emotions. The study found that certain castes had better coping mechanisms than others. The type of family structure was not found to be significantly associated with coping abilities. Parental occupation was

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identified as a determinant with significant associations with coping abilities, although the influence was limited. Participation in co-curricular activities was found to have a significant association with coping abilities.

Table 10 : Association and direction of relationship between Coping stress and Socio-demographic variables.

Socio-Demographic Variable (Determinants)	Test Applied	Gender	Caste	Type of Family	Occupation of Father	Occupation of Mother	Education of Father	Education of Mother	Co-curricular Activities
Coping with Stress	CS	10.634***	10.610**	1.197	22.881***	11.577***	31.116***	23.188***	29.329***
	CC	-0.164***	-0.045	-0.092	0.178***	-0.041	-.135***	-.138***	-0.056

The association between caste and coping abilities found moderate. The type of family structure did not show a significant association with coping abilities. The significant associations between parental occupation and coping abilities highlight the potential influence of parental roles and responsibilities on stress coping strategies. The significant associations between parental education and stress coping skills among adolescents were found. The significant association between participation in co-curricular activities and coping abilities indicates that finding a balance between extracurricular engagement and stress management.

6. Conclusions

The analysis provides valuable insights into various determinants related to different aspects of adolescent students in the rural district of Anand, Gujarat. These determinants include factors such as caste, family structure, parental occupation and education, and participation in co-curricular activities. The tables demonstrate statistically significant associations between these determinants and aspects such as self-awareness, empathy, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, creative thinking, critical thinking, decision making, problem solving, coping with emotions, and coping with stress.

The findings highlight the importance of considering socio-cultural, familial, and educational factors in understanding and fostering these aspects among adolescent students. The relationships between the determinants and the respective aspects vary in terms of strength and nature, indicating the need for further research and analysis to explore these connections in greater depth and across different

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contexts. The insights provided can inform the development of interventions, support systems, and targeted strategies to enhance the desired skills and abilities among adolescent students in the rural district of Anand, Gujarat.

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