



Exploring The Relationship Between Life Skills Acquisition And Psychological Well-Being Among Secondary School Students

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Abstract	
	<p>This correlational study examines the relationship between life skills acquisition and psychological well-being among secondary school students. The research aims to understand how life skills impact students' psychological well-being, defined as positive emotions, engagement, and a sense of purpose. Using a normative survey method, data was collected from 400 standard IX students in various districts of Kerala through stratified random sampling. The study compares Psychological Well-Being (Criterion Variable) and Life Skills Attainment (Predictor Variable) using a General Data Sheet, a Psychological Well-Being Scale, and a Life Skills Attainment Test. The findings are expected to provide insights for educators, policymakers, and practitioners to enhance secondary education and mental health support.</p>
CC License CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0	Key words: <i>Life Skills Acquisition, Psychological Well-being, Secondary School Students</i>

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage marked by significant physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes, during which secondary school students face numerous challenges, such as academic pressure, social relationships, and identity formation. These challenges can profoundly impact their psychological well-being, including their happiness, self-esteem, resilience, and life satisfaction. Recognizing the essential role of life skills—such as problem-solving, decision-making, effective communication, emotional management, relationship building, and stress coping—in promoting overall well-being, this research aims to explore the connection between life skills and psychological well-being among secondary school students. Understanding this relationship is crucial for designing interventions and programs that enhance students' well-being and equip them with the necessary skills for a successful future. By identifying the specific life skills most strongly associated with psychological well-being, educational institutions can implement targeted curricular enhancements that support students' mental and emotional health and prepare them for a successful transition into adulthood.

Life Skills

A person's ability to act effectively and achieve a goal is referred to as having "life skills," which in terms is a combination of knowledge, behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs. The depth of an individual's skill determines how strong their moral conduct will be. WHO defines life skills as "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour and enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life"? (WHO, 1994). Adaptive means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. 'Positive

behaviour implies that a person is forward-looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions. UNICEF defines life skills as a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills (UNICEF, 2001). Life skills are in constant evolution both in terms of individual's personal as well as the economic, social, and cultural contexts. The capacity for empowerment, self-satisfaction, and the ability to be a part of a diverse community and work toward shared objectives are all included in the general understanding of life skills. It also includes personal fulfilment and realisation of social responsibility. Life skills are developed as a result of a purposeful processing of information, impressions, encounters and experiences both individual and social that are part of one's daily life and work, and the rapid changes that occur in the course of one's life. In short, life skills are those aptitudes that enhance young people's mental health and competency as they deal with life's challenges. The World Health Organization (WHO, 1997) has identified ten core Life Skills namely, Empathy, Self-awareness, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Decision Making, Problem Solving, Effective communication, Interpersonal Relationship, Coping with Stress and Coping with Emotion. Based on its association and purpose, these ten core life skills can again be grouped as follows and explained further:

- Mother skills - Self Awareness, Empathy
- Survival skills - Interpersonal Relationships, Effective Communication
- Thinking skills - Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking
- Negotiation skills - Decision Making, Problem Solving
- Coping skills - Coping with Emotion, Coping with Stress

Psychological Well-Being

The concept of psychological wellbeing is generally related to other terminology used to describe positive mental states, such as happiness and satisfaction. "Psychological well-being refers to inter- and intra-individual levels of positive functioning that can include one's relatedness with others and self-referent attitudes that include one's sense of mastery and personal growth. Subjective well-being reflects dimensions of affect judgments of life satisfaction" (Burns, 2015).

The WHO constitution states: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." An important implication of this definition is that mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities. Mental health is a state of psychological well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (Mental Health, 2021). The term psychological well-being (PWB) refers to a person's level of psychological health and happiness, which includes emotions of achievement and life satisfaction. PWB includes a person's outlook on life, taking into account not only perceptions of physical health but also of self-worth, self-efficacy, interpersonal relationships, resilience and overall happiness.

Significance of the Study

Life Skills education was implemented in the curriculum in order to improve the mental health and well-being of children. Acquiring a good mental well-being is very much important and Life Skills Attainment can help to achieve Psychological Well-Being to a certain level. Mental health is now understood to involve both the absence of mental illness and the presence of Psychological Well-Being. Psychological Well-Being is a complex construct that concerns optimal psychological functioning and experience. "It may be defined as including hedonic (enjoyment, pleasure) and eudaimonic (fulfilment, happiness) as well as resilience (coping, emotion regulation, healthy problem solving)" (Tang, Tang & Gross, 2019). Here, the investigator tries to find out the relationship between psychological well-being and life skills attainment among secondary school students. In order to promote holistic development, the National Education Policy 2020 places a strong emphasis on students' mental health and wellbeing. Life Skills learning is part of an effective programme for adolescent health, to promote positive health behaviour and psychological well-being (Life Skills Education School Handbook – Non communicable Diseases, 2020). For a child's holistic development, UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, and NEP 2020 point out the importance of life skills education and its integration into curricula. They also place a spotlight on children's mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, understanding the link between the two components is very important. Hence, the investigators formulated certain research questions such as

1. How is the mental health of children affected by their level of life skill attainment?
2. Do mental health and life skill attainment have any connection to one another?
3. What level of life skills have the children attained?
4. What is the state of the psychological health of children right now?

Objectives of the Study

The investigators design the following objectives for the study:

- To study the level of Life Skill Attainment among Secondary School Students based on total sample.
- To know the status of Psychological Well-Being among Secondary School Students on total sample.
- To find out the relationship between Life Skill Attainment and Psychological Well-Being among Secondary School Students.

Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses of the study are as follows:

1. There is no significant difference in the level of life skill attainment among secondary school students in the total sample.
2. There is no significant difference in the psychological well-being status among secondary school students in the total sample.
3. There is no significant correlation between the Life Skill Attainment and Psychological Well-Being of Secondary School Students.

Methodology

This study falls under the category of descriptive research. Thus, the data for this study was collected using a normative survey method. Considering the nature of present study Stratified random sampling technique was used. In this study, emphasis has been given on inferential quantitative approach to compare the different variables. The variables selected for this study are Psychological Well-Being (Criterion Variable) and Life Skills Attainment (Predictor Variable).

Population and Sample

In the present study, population consists of Secondary School Students of Kerala. The sample for the present study consists of 400 Secondary School Students of standard IX, both boys and girls. The sample was drawn from urban and rural areas, from nuclear and joint family and from aided and un-aided schools. The sample of the study was selected randomly from different schools of Kottayam, Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta and Idukki districts. The sample was selected in such a way to ensure that every unit of the population, be selected in the sample by stratified random sampling technique.

Tools Used for the Study

The tools employed for the collection of data for the present investigation are:

- General Data Sheet
- Psychological Well- Being Scale (Bincy & Smitha, 2022)
- Life Skills Attainment Test (Viji. K. Ramakrishnan & A. Sudharma, 2014).

PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION

The collection of data was carried out from October 31st to November 25th, 2022. For the purpose of data collection, the investigators visited selected schools from Kottayam, Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta and Idukki districts in the state of Kerala.

• Scoring procedure of Psychological Well-Being Scale

Scoring of final Psychological Well-Being Scale was done using the same procedure used for scoring the draft form of the Psychological Well-Being Scale in the pilot study process. Final form of Psychological Well- Being Scale consisted of 49 items. Therefore, the maximum scores in this five point scale for any individual would be 245 and minimum scores would be 49.

• Scoring Procedure of Life Skills Attainment Test

Scoring of Life Skills Attainment Testis given in such a way that for each question there are five statements, each statement consists of different scores ranking 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 according to the appropriateness of the responses, in which score 5 indicates very good, 4 indicates good, 3 indicates average, 2 indicates poor and 1 indicates very poor in life skills attainment. Therefore, the maximum scores for any individual would be 200 and minimum scores would be 40.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The present study intended to find out the correlation between Life Skills Attainment and Psychological Well-Being. Descriptive statistics such as Arithmetic mean and Standard deviation as well as Inferential statistics like Karl- Pearson's co- efficient of correlation were applied for analysis of data.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

LEVEL OF LIFE SKILLS ATTAINMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Life Skills Attainment scores were collected and calculated the measures of central tendency, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis. The details are given in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Analysis of the scores from Life Skills Attainment Test of Secondary School Students

Variable	N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	Kurtosis
LIFE SKILL ATTAINMENT (200)	400	162	167	174	19.8	103	197	-0.896	0.247

Table 1 shows a total sample size of N. The arithmetic mean for the sample is 162, with scores ranging from 103 to 197 on a scale of 40 to 200, indicating above-average life skills attainment among secondary school students. The median score is 167, and the mode is 174. The distribution is negatively skewed (skewness = -0.896), with scores concentrated at the high end. The standard deviation is 19.8. Skewness between -0.5 and -1 indicates moderate skewness, suggesting a fairly symmetrical distribution. The kurtosis is 0.247, indicating a platykurtic distribution with thin tails and a flat shape, meaning fewer scores are near the mean and more are at the extremes.

Level of Life Skills Attainment among Secondary School Students based on Total Sample

In order to find out the level of Life Skills Attainment among Secondary School Students, the data obtained was analysed using descriptive statistics namely mean and standard deviation. The details are given in table 2.

Table 2 Descriptive analysis of the scores of Life Skills Attainment of Secondary School Students based on Total Sample

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	M+SD	M-SD
Life Skills Attainment	162	19.8	181.8	142.2

From the table 2, it is observed that the arithmetic mean scores of the Life Skills Attainment of Secondary School Students is (162) and standard deviation is (19.8). The whole sample is divided into five groups- Low scorers, Below Average, Average, Above Average and High scorers. The percentage of the students falling in these groups are calculated and is given below in the table 3.

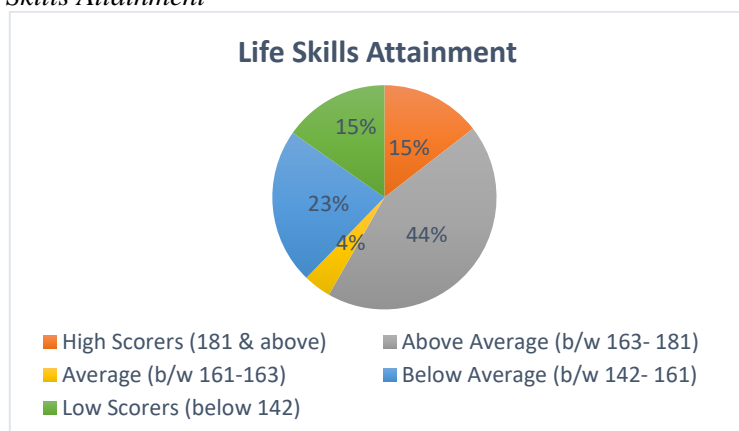
Table 3 Categorisation of Secondary School Students based on level of Life Skills Attainment

Sl.No.	Life Skills Attainment Group	Frequency	Percentage
1	High Scorers (181 & above)	58	14.50%
2	Above Average (b/w 163- 181)	175	43.75%
3	Average (b/w 161-163)	16	4%
4	Below Average (b/w 142- 161)	90	22.50%
5	Low Scorers (below 142)	61	15.25%

From the above table, it is clear that out of 400 students only 58 have high Life Skills, 175 students have above average level, 16 students have average level, 90 students have below average level and 61 students

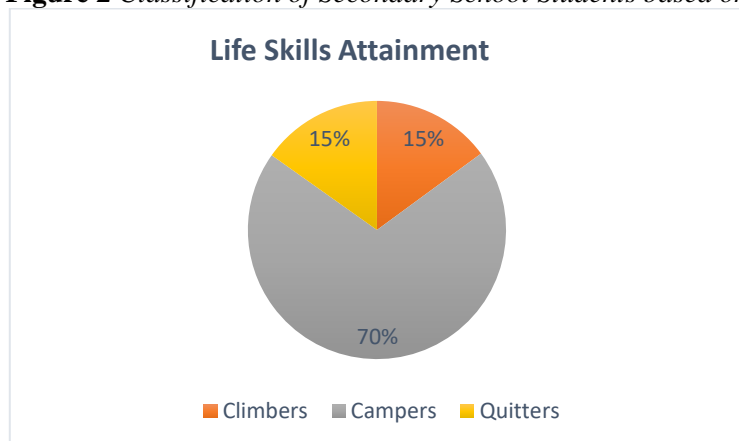
have low level Life Skills. The details of the percentage of the students according to their level of Life Skills are graphically represented in the figure 1.

Figure 1 Graphical representation of percentage of Secondary School Students based on their levels of Life Skills Attainment



Based on the above result students can be classified as Climbers, Campers and Quitters. The classification of students is graphically represented in the figure 2 given below.

Figure 2 Classification of Secondary School Students based on different groups



The above diagram reveals that 15% of students are climbers (181 & above), 70% of students are campers (142- 181) and 15% of students are quitters (below 142). Climbers have high levels of Life Skills Attainment, while campers have an average level of attainment and quitters have very low level of Life Skills Attainment.

STATUS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Psychological Well- Being scores were collected and calculated the measures of central tendency, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis. The details are given in Table 4.

Table 4 Descriptive Analysis of scores of Psychological Well- Being of Secondary School Students

Variable	N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	Kurtosis
Psychological Well-Being	400	178	178	176	20.2	131	226	0.0635	-0.272

Table 4 shows a total sample size of N. The mean psychological well-being score of secondary school students is 178, with scores ranging from 131 to 226 on a scale of 49 to 245, indicating above-average well-being. The median is 178, and the mode is 176. The distribution is positively skewed with a skewness of 0.0635, suggesting a fairly symmetrical distribution. The standard deviation is 20.2. The kurtosis is -0.272, indicating a platykurtic distribution with thin tails and a flat shape, meaning fewer scores are near the mean and more are at the extremes.

Level of Psychological Well- Being among Secondary School Students based on Total Sample

In order to find out the level of Psychological Well-Being of Secondary School Students, the data obtained was analysed using descriptive statistics namely mean and standard deviation. The details are given in table 5.

Table 5 Descriptive analysis of the scores of Psychological Well-Being of Secondary School Students based on Total Sample

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	M+SD	M-SD
Psychological Well-Being	178	20.2	198.2	157.8

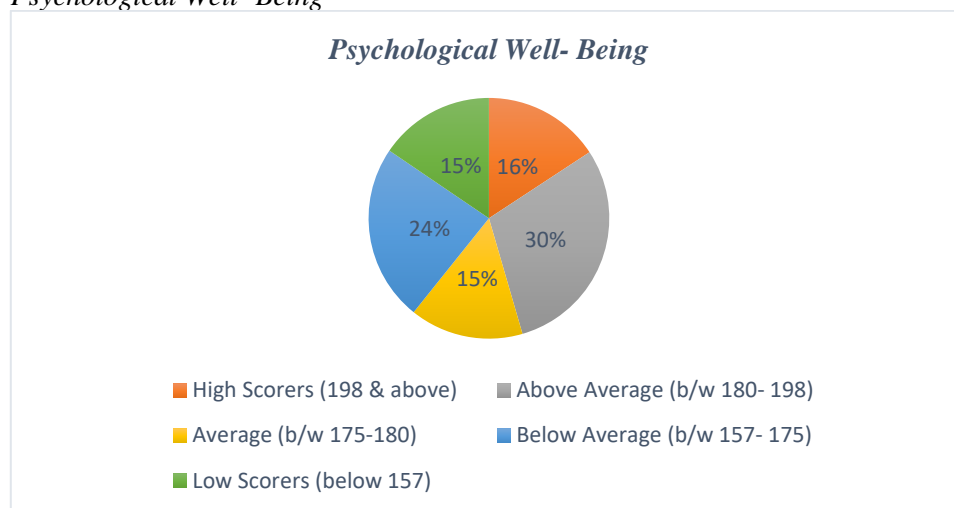
From the table 5, it is observed that the arithmetic mean scores of the Psychological Well- Being of Secondary School Students is (178) and standard deviation is (20.2). The whole sample is divided into five groups- Low scorers, Below Average, Average, Above Average and High scorers. The percentages of the students falling in these groups are calculated and are given below in the table 6.

Table 6 Categorisation of Secondary School Students based on level of Psychological Well- Being

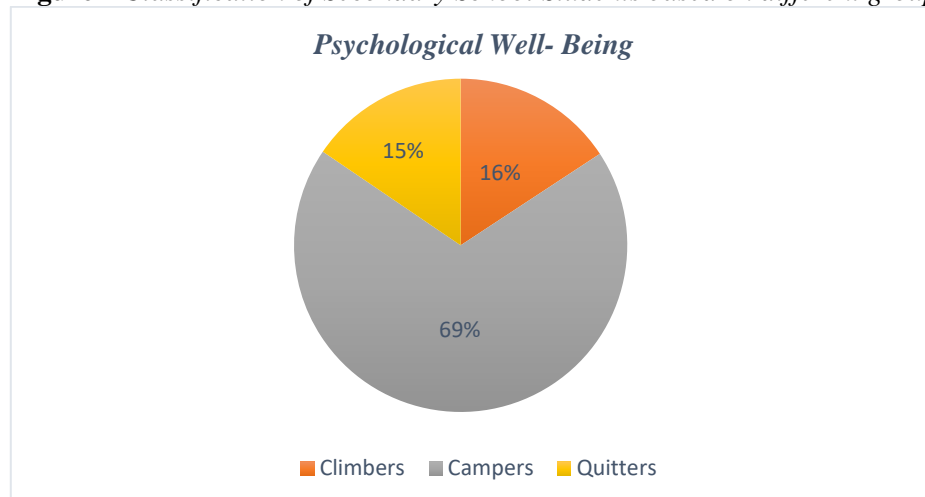
Sl.No.	Psychological Well-Being Group	Frequency	Percentage
1	High Scorers (198 & above)	63	15.75%
2	Above Average (b/w 180- 198)	119	29.75%
3	Average (b/w 175-180)	61	15.25%
4	Below Average (b/w 157- 175)	95	23.75%
5	Low Scorers (below 157)	62	15.50%

From the above table, it is clear that out of 400 students only 63 have high Psychological Well-Being, 119 students have above average level, 61 students have an average level, 95 students have below average level and 62 students have low level of Psychological Well-Being. The details of the percentage of the students according to their level of Psychological Well-Being are graphically represented in the figure 3.

Figure 3 Graphical representation of percentage of Secondary School Students based on their levels of Psychological Well- Being



Based on the above result students can be classified as Climbers, Campers and Quitters. The classification of students is graphically represented in the figure 4, given below.

Figure 4 Classification of Secondary School Students based on different groups

The above diagram reveals that 16% of students are climbers (198 & above), 69% of students are campers (157- 198) and 15% of students are quitters (below 157). Climbers have high levels of Psychological Well-Being, while campers have an average level of Well-Being and quitters have very low level of Psychological Well-Being.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIFE SKILLS ATTAINMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

The third objective was to find out the correlation between Life Skills Attainment and Psychological Well-Being of Secondary School Students. The research hypothesis formulated for the objectives is – There is no significant correlation between the Life Skill Attainment and Psychological Well-Being of Secondary School Students. In order to determine whether there is any significant relationship between Life Skills Attainment and Psychological Well-Being, Pearson's product moment correlation was employed. The result is given in Table below.

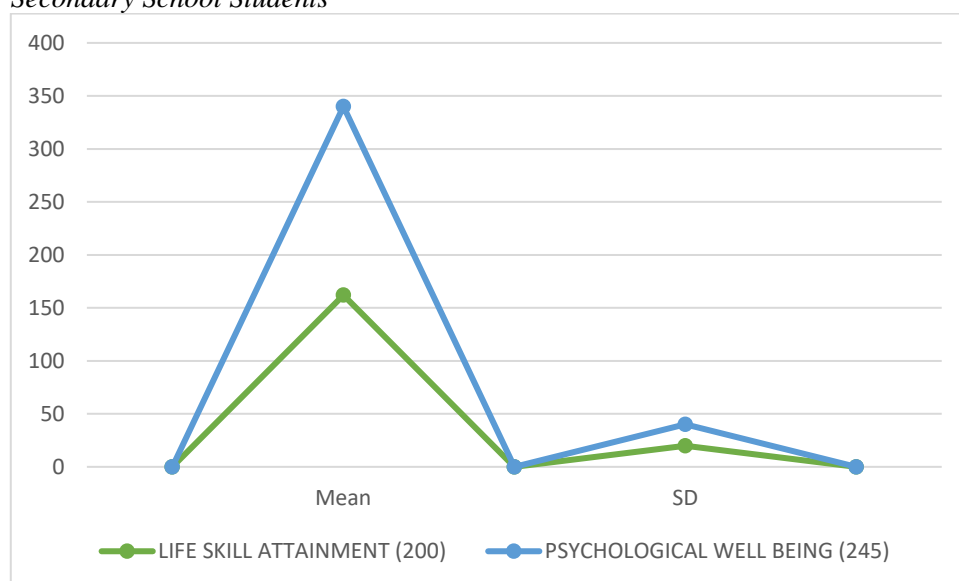
Table 7 Relationship between Life Skills Attainment and Psychological Well-Being of Secondary School Students based on Total Sample

Variables		LIFE SKILL ATTAINMENT (200)	PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING (245)
LIFE SKILLS ATTAINMENT (200)	Pearson's r	—	
	p-value	—	
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING (245)	Pearson's r	0.871	***
	p-value	<.001	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

From the above table, it is observed that the calculated 'r' value is (0.871). The correlation coefficient can take values between -1 through 0 to +1. The sign (+ or -) of the correlation affects its interpretation. When the correlation is positive ($r > 0$), as the value of one variable increases, so does the other. It indicates that there is a positive high relationship between Life Skills Attainment and Psychological Well-Being among Secondary School Students in the total sample. The result is depicted in Stacked line chart and is shown in figure 5.

Figure 5 Graphical representation of scores of Life Skills Attainment and Psychological Well-Being of Secondary School Students



The stacked line chart depicts that the mean scores and standard deviation of Life Skills Attainment and Psychological Well-Being of students increases simultaneously. This shows that there is a significant correlation between Life Skills Attainment and Psychological Well-Being of Secondary School Students. Hence, the null hypothesis, there is no significant correlation between Life Skills Attainment and Psychological Well-Being among Secondary School Students is rejected. The analysis of the data showed that Life Skills Attainment and Psychological Well-Being is related to each other.

FINDINGS DERIVED FROM THE STUDY

The major findings that have emerged as a result of the statistical analysis of the obtained data are represented below

- 1: Life Skills Attainment of Secondary School Students was found to be above average (80% & above)
- 2: Out of the sample respondents 70 % of Secondary School Students are having moderate level of Life Skills Attainment
- 3: Psychological Well-Being of Secondary School Students is found to be above average level (71% & above).
- 4: Out of the sample respondents 69 % of Secondary School Students are having moderate level of Psychological Well-Being
- 5: There is a positive high relationship between Life Skills Attainment and Psychological Well-Being of Secondary School Students.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

From the present study we find out that there is a significant correlation between Life Skills Attainment and Psychological Well-Being among Secondary School Students. Students who generally achieve greater degrees in life skills also tend to have stronger psychological wellbeing. The findings indicate that developing life skills has a positive impact on reducing mental health symptoms, particularly symptoms of anxiety, despair, and stress among students. This study suggests that teaching, students' life skills is an effective way to lessen the symptoms of mental diseases and improve their psychological well-being.

The Psychological Well-Being Scale, which was developed by the researchers and was employed in the study, can be used by teachers to evaluate the level of well-being in their pupils and develop strategies to enhance it. The researchers put a lot of effort into gathering data and spent a lot of time and energy establishing facts and findings, but it will only be useful when it can be properly and successfully applied to improve the practices already in place in the field from which it is done. This finding from the current study may be useful to parents, teachers, school administrators, and policy makers. Following recommendations and implementations may be made on the basis of the results of the present study:

- The life skills programmes should be introduced in schools to ensure healthy psycho-social development of adolescents.

- Lessons need to incorporate more interactive and practical activities so that students may learn well in the classroom and find life skills education interesting.
- The foundation and pedagogy of life skills education must be taught in the teacher education courses in colleges and universities for teachers. This will give teachers the necessary preparation to present the life skills education material in classrooms. The teachers' lack of expertise in teaching life skills education is a significant barrier to its implementation.
- Ample resources are necessary for the successful teaching of life skills education. For the teaching of life skills education, schools must have adequate resources available. To improve the efficacy of life skills education programmes, the Department of Education should support the creation of additional life skills education tools such board games and audio-visuals. The students will find the instruction more interesting and engaging.
- Different activities that can be used to enhance Life Skills in Students are as follows: Classroom Discussions, Brainstorming, Role Plays, Group activities, Analysis of Situation and Case Studies, Story-Telling, Debates etc.
- Providing effective mental health and wellness training to help people deal with the challenges of increasing workloads and insufficient help, which increases stress, anxiety, and pressure.
- Students must be aware of the importance of mental health and wellbeing on their quality of life. Improving the mental health literacy of students will provide key individual awareness to specific issues. This can be done through specialised lessons on relationship education as well as mental health in school curriculums.
- Promote healthy eating, encourage students to stay hydrated, advocate for physical activity are some other ways to improve their well-being.

Life Skills education is very important in the current scenario. It not only helps the students to build and develop mental health it also helps the students to bounce back, resilience helps them to face difficulties and challenging situations.

CONCLUSION

Hence from the study it is evident that Life Skills Attainment and Psychological Well- Being are positively correlated. Which again can be interpreted that as the Life Skills Attainment is high, the Psychological Well-Being is maintained throughout. The result shows remarkable consideration of Life Skills Attainment.

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