

Awareness of Life Skill among Post Graduate Students of Mayurbhanj District

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Abstract

Life skills are psychosocial, cognitive, emotional and interpersonal abilities that help individuals respond constructively to everyday demands and challenges. In higher education, postgraduate students face academic deadlines, research expectations, career uncertainty, changing relationships and pressure to make consequential decisions. Awareness of life skills is therefore an important educational concern, not merely an adjunct to academic achievement. This article reports a descriptive survey of life-skills awareness among postgraduate students of Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo (MSCB) University, Baripada, Mayurbhanj, Odisha. The study focused on differences by gender and academic stream. The source thesis reports a population of 1,000 postgraduate students and a simple random sample of 100 students: 42 male and 58 female students, including 59 from science and 41 from arts. Data were collected through a researcher-developed 30-item Life Skills Awareness Scale, reviewed by the research supervisor and administered as a five-point rating scale through Google Forms. Mean, standard deviation and independent-samples t-tests were used. Male students recorded a mean of 109.04 (SD = 6.68), compared with 108.34 (SD = 8.97) among female students; the reported t value was 0.44. Science students recorded a mean of 109.23 (SD = 8.43), while arts students recorded 107.65 (SD = 7.82); the reported t value was 0.96. Neither difference was statistically significant at the .05 or .01 level. The findings suggest that awareness scores in this sample were broadly similar across the two comparison groups. The article discusses implications for curriculum design, counselling, student support and inclusive life-skills education, while acknowledging the limitations of a small, single-university sample and a self-report measure. The findings should be interpreted as sample-specific and should not be generalized to all postgraduate students in Odisha without further research.

Keywords: life skills; life-skills awareness; postgraduate students; higher education; gender; academic stream; descriptive survey; Odisha.

Introduction

Education is expected to prepare learners not only to acquire subject knowledge but also to participate thoughtfully in personal, social and professional life. Academic qualifications alone do not guarantee that a learner can manage stress, resolve conflict, communicate assertively, evaluate information, or make balanced decisions. These capacities become particularly relevant during postgraduate study, when students are expected to work with greater independence, conduct research, plan careers and negotiate complex social and institutional demands.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 1997) describes life skills as abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. This definition places life skills at the intersection of knowledge, attitudes and action. A student may know that time management is important but still struggle to plan tasks; may understand the value of respectful communication but find it difficult to express disagreement; or may recognize stress without knowing how to respond constructively. Life-skills education attempts to bridge such gaps between knowing, valuing and doing.

The thesis on which this article is based situates life skills within the changing social environment and highlights the challenges adolescents and young adults may experience, including emotional pressure, peer influence, academic demands and uncertainty about the future. Although much life-skills literature concentrates on adolescents, postgraduate students also face transitions that require self-management, resilience and interpersonal competence. These students may be preparing for employment, professional roles, further research or public service. Life-skills awareness can help them recognize personal strengths and limitations, seek support when needed and apply appropriate strategies to everyday problems.

The ten core life skills identified in the thesis, following WHO (1997), are self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, coping with stress and coping with emotions. These areas overlap. For example, resolving a disagreement may require empathy to understand another perspective, critical thinking to assess the issue, emotional regulation to avoid impulsive reactions and communication skills to negotiate a solution.

In higher education, life skills should not be treated as a substitute for disciplinary knowledge. Rather, they support students in using knowledge effectively. A student with strong problem-solving skills may approach a research obstacle systematically; a student who manages stress may sustain effort during examinations or dissertation work; and a student with effective interpersonal skills may collaborate more productively with peers and supervisors. Awareness is a necessary starting point, though awareness alone does not prove that students consistently demonstrate a skill in practice.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

The rationale for the study is that students need to recognize life skills and understand their relevance before they can deliberately strengthen and apply them. The thesis argues that life-skills awareness can support positive choices, personal growth and the transfer of classroom learning to real-life situations. In postgraduate education, this concern has practical significance because students are expected to organize their work, meet deadlines, communicate with faculty and peers, make decisions about career pathways and respond to academic setbacks.

The study also has a local significance. It focuses on postgraduate students at MSCB University in Baripada, Mayurbhanj, Odisha. The local context makes the investigation useful as an initial account of students in one higher-education setting. It may help educators reflect on whether life-skills learning should be made more visible within academic advising, student orientation, counselling, seminars and co-curricular activities.

A further reason for examining gender and academic stream is that students may encounter different learning experiences and social expectations. However, such differences should be tested empirically rather than assumed. Comparing male and female students, and students from science and arts streams, offers a limited but relevant way to examine whether the sample shows meaningful variation in overall

awareness scores. The purpose is not to rank groups but to assess whether the observed scores differ statistically.

Conceptual Understanding of Life Skills

Meaning and nature

Life skills are practical psychosocial capacities that help people respond adaptively to everyday situations. They include cognitive processes, emotional regulation and interpersonal behaviour. They differ from narrow technical or occupational skills because they are transferable across situations: decision-making is relevant to academic planning, relationships and employment, while communication is needed in classroom discussion, research collaboration and professional settings.

The thesis also refers to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO, 2001), which frames life skills in terms of social, cognitive, emotional and interpersonal capacities. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that life skills are multidimensional, learnable and context-sensitive. The particular way a skill is expressed may vary across cultures and situations, but the broad need to manage emotions, think carefully, communicate clearly and maintain constructive relationships is widely relevant.

The ten core life skills

Life skill	Meaning in postgraduate education
Self-awareness	Recognizing one's strengths, limitations, values, feelings, goals and learning needs.
Empathy	Understanding the perspectives and feelings of classmates, faculty and other people.
Critical thinking	Evaluating claims, evidence, assumptions and alternatives before reaching a judgement.
Creative thinking	Generating new ideas and alternative approaches to academic or practical problems.
Decision-making	Comparing options and likely consequences before choosing a course of action.
Problem-solving	Defining a difficulty, identifying possible solutions, evaluating them and reviewing outcomes.
Effective communication	Expressing ideas, needs and concerns clearly through verbal and non-verbal communication and listening.
Interpersonal relationships	Building, maintaining and, when necessary, ending relationships constructively.
Coping with stress	Recognizing sources and signs of stress and using appropriate coping strategies or support.
Coping with emotions	Identifying emotions and responding to them in ways that do not undermine judgement or relationships.

Life skills and student development

These ten skills are interconnected rather than isolated competencies. Self-awareness can help a student identify when pressure is becoming unmanageable; coping with stress can support concentration; critical and creative thinking can broaden the range of solutions; and decision-making can guide the selection of a feasible response. Effective communication and empathy can help students request assistance, work in teams and manage disagreements. Interpersonal relationships can create a sense of belonging and access to social support.

Life-skills awareness must nevertheless be distinguished from demonstrated competence. A rating scale can capture students' reported awareness or perceived use of skills, but it cannot by itself establish how students behave in every real-world situation. Educational institutions should therefore combine awareness-building with practice, reflection, feedback and opportunities to apply skills in authentic contexts.

Review of Related Literature

The thesis reviews Indian and international studies that generally present life-skills education as relevant to psychosocial development, adjustment, emotional well-being and positive behaviour. The studies summarized below are reported in the supplied thesis; the descriptions are condensed for the present article.

Studies reported in the Indian context

Yadav and Iqbal (2009), as summarized in the thesis, examined life-skills training in relation to self-esteem, adjustment and empathy among adolescents. The reported findings indicated positive effects on self-esteem, emotional and educational adjustment, total adjustment and empathy. Kaur (2011) examined a life-skills intervention and emotional intelligence among college adolescents; the thesis reports a significant impact of the intervention on emotional intelligence.

Rao et al. (2011) discussed the inclusion of life skills in youth education, while Vranda and Rao (2011) described life-skills education for young adolescents in India. These studies, as summarized in the thesis, emphasize the relevance of life skills for behaviour, psychosocial competence and preparation for adult life. Khera and Khosla (2012) reported a positive connection between core life skills and self-concept among adolescents who had experienced a school life-skills programme.

Other studies reviewed in the thesis address life-skills interventions among adolescent girls, rural school students and young people with behavioral or emotional difficulties. The thesis reports that intervention studies by Agric (2014) and Pujar and Patil (2016) found post-intervention improvements in selected areas such as critical thinking, coping with stress, problem-solving and empathy. Dhingra and Chauhan (2017) reported that coping with stress was a comparatively weaker dimension in their adolescent sample and noted associations between life skills and selected family or socioeconomic variables.

These studies offer a rationale for examining life skills in education. However, much of the literature summarized in the thesis concerns school-age adolescents or intervention programmes rather than postgraduate students. The present study therefore contributes a small, context-specific descriptive account of life-skills awareness among postgraduate students.

International and broader skills literature

The thesis includes the Pacific Policy Research Center (2010) review of twenty-first-century skills, which

highlights creative thinking, effective communication, information and media literacy, productivity and life-and-career skills. It also summarizes work by Raymond and colleagues (2011) on teacher care, life-skills development and academic achievement among junior secondary students in Hong Kong. The latter points to the possible importance of a supportive educational environment in students' development. The literature reviewed in the thesis collectively supports the educational relevance of life skills, but it does not eliminate the need for local empirical evidence. Differences in age, institution, programme, measurement tool and cultural context can affect findings. The current study should therefore be read as a preliminary investigation, not as proof that all postgraduate students have the same level of awareness or that awareness directly causes academic success.

Research Gap and Purpose

The source thesis identifies the need to understand life-skills awareness among postgraduate students at MSCB University. Its specific focus is the comparison of awareness scores by gender and academic stream. The study does not examine every dimension separately, nor does it test the effects of a life-skills intervention. It is a descriptive survey of overall scale scores.

The purpose of this article is to present the study in a concise journal-article structure, explain the reported findings and discuss their implications for higher education. The interpretation is intentionally limited to the variables and statistics available in the thesis.

Objectives and Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To study the awareness level of life skills among postgraduate students with regard to gender variation.
2. To study the awareness level of life skills among postgraduate students with regard to academic stream (science and arts).

The null hypotheses were:

H01: There is no significant difference in life-skills awareness between male and female postgraduate students.

H02: There is no significant difference in life-skills awareness between science and arts postgraduate students.

Methodology

Research design

A descriptive survey method was used. As described in the thesis, this method was selected to examine the present status of life-skills awareness and compare scores across specified groups. The design was cross-sectional: responses were collected at one point rather than tracking changes over time or testing an intervention.

Population and sample

The population was identified as 1,000 postgraduate students at MSCB University, Baripada, Mayurbhanj, Odisha. The sample consisted of 100 postgraduate students selected through simple random sampling, according to the thesis. Of these, 42 were male and 58 were female; 59 were from science and 41 were from arts.

Variable	Group	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	42	42%
Gender	Female	58	58%
Academic stream	Science	59	59%
Academic stream	Arts	41	41%
Total	—	100	100%

Research instrument

The researcher used a self-developed Life Skills Awareness Scale, reviewed by the research supervisor. The instrument contained 30 positive statements and used a five-point response format: Always, Most often, Sometimes, Very little and Never. The scoring weights were 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Accordingly, the possible total score for the 30 items would range from 30 to 150 if all items were scored as described.

The thesis does not provide sufficient evidence in the available methods description about pilot testing, reliability coefficients, construct validity, item-level analysis or the scale's cut-off points for classifying awareness as low, moderate or high. These psychometric details should be added before submission to a journal if they are available. The present article therefore reports the group means as presented in the source and avoids making unsupported claims about validated categories.

Data collection procedure

Data were collected from postgraduate students of MSCB University using Google Forms. The researcher provided instructions for completing the response sheet and calculated scores after responses were received. The thesis does not describe in detail the dates of data collection, response rate, consent procedure, confidentiality safeguards or ethics approval. These details should be clarified in a final manuscript if documented.

Statistical techniques

Mean scores and standard deviations were used to describe the groups. Independent-samples t-test values were reported to test differences between male and female students and between science and arts students. The thesis reports 98 degrees of freedom for both comparisons and gives critical values of 1.98 at the .05 level and 2.63 at the .01 level. The article reproduces the reported statistics rather than recalculating them from raw data, which were not supplied.

Results

Life-skills awareness by gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Reported t	Decision
Male	42	109.04	6.68	0.44	Not significant
Female	58	108.34	8.97		

The mean score for male students was 109.04 (SD = 6.68), while the mean for female students was 108.34 (SD = 8.97). The reported t value was 0.44, below the critical values stated in the thesis at both the .05 and .01 levels. The null hypothesis of no statistically significant gender difference was therefore retained

in the source study. Although the male mean was slightly higher, the difference was small and not statistically significant. The data do not support the conclusion that gender is associated with a meaningful difference in life-skills awareness in this sample.

Life-skills awareness by academic stream

Academic stream	N	Mean	SD	Reported t	Decision
Science	59	109.23	8.43	0.96	Not significant
Arts	41	107.65	7.82		

Science students had a mean score of 109.23 (SD = 8.43), compared with 107.65 (SD = 7.82) among arts students. The reported t value was 0.96, which was below the critical values stated in the thesis at both the .05 and .01 levels. The null hypothesis of no statistically significant difference by academic stream was therefore retained. The observed difference in means favoured science students slightly, but the available evidence does not establish a statistically significant difference.

Summary of findings

Comparison	Group with higher mean	Mean difference	Reported t	Conclusion
Gender	Male	0.70	0.44	No statistically significant difference reported
Stream	Science	1.58	0.96	No statistically significant difference reported

The thesis characterizes awareness as high in both groups for each comparison. However, the available methods section does not provide validated cut-offs for the categories high, moderate or low. In a journal submission, it is more precise to state that the group mean scores were similar and that the between-group differences were not statistically significant.

Discussion

The principal finding is that no statistically significant difference was reported in life-skills awareness by gender or academic stream among the 100 postgraduate students sampled from MSCB University. The male and female means were close, and the science and arts means were also relatively close. This pattern suggests that awareness, as measured by the study's scale, was broadly comparable across these groups within this sample.

The gender result should not be interpreted as proof that all male and female students have identical experiences or needs. A non-significant result means that the analysis did not provide sufficient evidence of a difference under the study's design and sample conditions. It does not prove that a difference is

impossible, nor does it establish equivalence. The female group was larger than the male group, and the standard deviations differed, which further supports cautious interpretation.

Likewise, the stream comparison does not justify the assumption that science students are more competent in life skills than arts students. The science mean was slightly higher, but the difference was not statistically significant. Life skills are not confined to any one discipline: scientific study may require analytical thinking and systematic problem-solving, while arts and humanities study may provide opportunities for interpretation, communication and perspective-taking. Both broad areas can cultivate the ten core life skills when teaching and assessment intentionally support them.

The findings are consistent with the broader position in the thesis that life-skills education is relevant across educational contexts. Prior studies summarized in the thesis describe associations between life-skills programmes and aspects of adjustment, empathy, self-esteem, emotional intelligence and coping. The current survey, however, does not test the effect of a programme and cannot establish causal relationships between awareness and academic achievement. Its contribution is narrower: it describes the group scores and finds no statistically significant difference for the two comparisons studied.

An important implication is that life-skills development should be available to all postgraduate students rather than targeted only at one gender or one academic stream. Universal provision can reduce stigma and acknowledge that every student may need opportunities to practise communication, self-management, stress coping and decision-making. Support can then be tailored to individual needs using additional evidence, rather than based on assumptions about group membership.

Educational Implications

Curriculum integration

Universities can incorporate life-skills learning into induction programmes, research methodology courses, seminars, mentoring and co-curricular activities. Integration need not mean adding a large separate subject. Short, structured activities can connect life skills with routine academic tasks: planning a dissertation timeline for goal-setting and decision-making; peer review for communication and empathy; evaluating sources for critical thinking; and reflective journals for self-awareness.

Experiential teaching strategies

The thesis highlights brainstorming and role-play as strategies for developing life skills, followed by guided discussion. These approaches can be adapted to postgraduate contexts. Brainstorming can help students generate alternative solutions to a research or group-work problem without prematurely judging ideas. Role-play can rehearse respectful disagreement, asking a supervisor for clarification, responding to peer pressure or giving constructive feedback. Case analysis, group projects, reflective writing and peer discussion can provide additional opportunities for practice.

Counselling and student well-being

Postgraduate students may experience uncertainty, workload pressure, financial concerns, relationship changes or anxiety about employment. Institutions should provide clear access to counselling, mentoring and referral services. Life-skills education can help students identify stressors and consider constructive coping strategies, but it should not be treated as a replacement for professional mental-health care where such care is needed. Faculty can normalize help-seeking and avoid presenting distress as a personal failure.

Communication and interpersonal competence

Students benefit from explicit opportunities to practise attentive listening, presentation, collaboration, negotiation and conflict resolution. Group assignments can include agreed norms for turn-taking, feedback

and accountability. Supervisors can model respectful communication and clarify expectations. Such practices support not only students' personal development but also the quality of research collaboration and academic participation.

Equitable and inclusive provision

Because the study did not find significant differences by gender or stream, the results support a universal rather than exclusive approach to awareness-building in this setting. The small differences in means should not be used to label one group as deficient. Instead, all students should have access to activities, while individual support is guided by confidential assessment and student choice. Materials should be accessible, culturally responsive and attentive to language diversity and different prior educational experiences.

Assessment and follow-up

Awareness initiatives should be evaluated rather than assumed to work. Institutions may use pre- and post-programme measures, student reflections, observed performance in role-play, peer feedback and follow-up interviews. Evaluation should distinguish awareness, confidence and actual skill performance. Where scales are used, reliability and validity evidence should be established, scoring rules should be transparent, and results should be interpreted in conjunction with other evidence.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations qualify the interpretation. First, the sample comprised only 100 postgraduate students from one university in Mayurbhanj. The results cannot be generalized confidently to all postgraduate students in Odisha or to other institutional settings. Second, the design was a descriptive survey conducted at one point in time; it cannot establish causal relationships or changes over time. Third, the instrument was researcher-developed. The thesis states that it was reviewed by the supervisor, but the available description does not report reliability coefficients, validation procedures or evidence supporting the classification of scores as high awareness.

Fourth, data were collected through Google Forms and self-report responses may be affected by social desirability, interpretation of items or differences in response styles. Fifth, the study examined only gender and academic stream. Other potentially relevant variables—such as socioeconomic background, rural or urban background, programme, year of study, family education, prior training and access to student support—were not examined. Finally, raw data were not available for independent reanalysis, so this article reproduces the summary statistics reported in the thesis. A final submission should verify all numerical values against the original dataset and confirm the statistical assumptions used.

Recommendations and Future Research

The source thesis recommends strengthening life-skills awareness among postgraduate students, paying attention to problem-solving, creativity, decision-making and communication, and extending future research to additional variables and larger samples. These recommendations can be refined into the following practical and research priorities.

1. Universities should provide regular life-skills activities for all postgraduate students, using workshops, peer learning, mentoring and reflective practice.
2. Student support should focus on demonstrated needs rather than assume that gender or academic stream determines competence.
3. Communication, stress management, emotional regulation and problem-solving should be practised through authentic academic situations, not only explained theoretically.
4. Future studies should include multiple universities and larger, more diverse samples from different districts of Odisha. Stratified sampling may help ensure representation across institutions, disciplines

and student groups.

5. Researchers should validate the Life Skills Awareness Scale or use a clearly documented standardized instrument. Reliability, validity, item characteristics and scoring interpretation should be reported.
6. Mixed-method studies could combine questionnaires with interviews, focus groups, reflective journals and observations to explore how students understand and apply life skills.
7. Longitudinal and intervention studies should examine whether structured life-skills programmes improve awareness, observed competence, well-being, academic engagement or help-seeking over time.
8. Further research may examine socioeconomic status, tribal and rural backgrounds, language, first-generation learner status, financial pressure, prior life-skills training and the views of teachers, guardians and counsellors.

Conclusion

Life skills are important educational capacities that help learners translate knowledge and values into adaptive action. For postgraduate students, they can support academic planning, research persistence, communication, emotional regulation, decision-making and the management of everyday challenges. This study examined life-skills awareness among 100 postgraduate students at MSCB University, Baripada, and compared scores by gender and academic stream. The reported results showed no statistically significant difference between male and female students ($t = 0.44$) or between science and arts students ($t = 0.96$). Male students and science students had slightly higher mean scores, but these differences were not statistically significant at the levels reported in the thesis. The findings therefore support a cautious conclusion that the measured awareness scores were broadly similar across the compared groups in this sample. They do not establish that every student has the same level of awareness or that awareness necessarily translates into effective practice.

The educational response should be to make life-skills learning a shared component of postgraduate education. Universities can create opportunities for students to practise self-awareness, empathy, critical and creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, effective communication, relationship-building and coping with stress and emotions. These opportunities should be inclusive, practical and evaluated systematically. Since the study is limited to a small sample from one institution and does not report full psychometric evidence for its scale, broader claims require replication through larger and methodologically stronger studies.

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