

UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENT LIFE SKILLS THROUGH THE LENS OF PARENTING AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT IN NAINITAL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between life skills, parent-child relationships, and school environment among adolescents in the Nainital district. Life skills, critical for adolescent development, are influenced by supportive parenting practices and conducive school environments. Using a descriptive survey method, the research sampled 800 adolescents through simple random sampling. Data were collected using standardized tools, including the parent-child relationship scale, school environment inventory, and a life skills assessment questionnaire developed by the investigator; the reliability of LSAQ is 0.80. Findings revealed significant correlations between adolescents' life skills and specific dimensions of father-child and mother-child relationships. Positive parenting traits such as protecting, loving, symbolic, and object reward were positively associated with life skills, while negative traits like neglect and punishment showed adverse impacts. The study underscores the pivotal roles of family and school in fostering critical life skills, contributing to adolescent well-being and resilience.

Keywords: Life Skills, Adolescents, Parent-child Relationship, Psychosocial Development, School Environment.

INTRODUCTION

Life skills are essential abilities that empower individuals to effectively navigate the challenges of daily life, make informed decisions, and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships. For adolescents, the development of life skills is crucial as it equips them to cope with the transitional phase of growing independence and responsibility. According to the World Health Organization (1997), life skills education helps adolescents enhance their critical thinking, communication, and decision-making abilities, fostering resilience and promoting mental well-being.

The parent-child relationship serves as the foundation for emotional and psychological growth. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that ecological systems theory advocated that family plays a central role in shaping a child's behavior and skills, acting as the primary environment for their development. Positive parenting practices, such as active engagement and emotional support, contribute to the development of essential life skills, including self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal relationships.

Similarly, the school environment plays a significant role in adolescent development. Murthy and Madhok (2023) highlighted that schools act as secondary platforms for social and cognitive development, providing structured opportunities to enhance life skills through interactions with peers, teachers, and extracurricular activities. A supportive school environment can foster critical thinking, stress management, and problem-solving abilities,



This paper has objectives related to SDG



equipping adolescents to face real-world challenges. Studies have shown that when schools integrate life skills education into their curricula, students demonstrate improved academic outcomes and enhanced social-emotional well-being (Ghosh, 2025; Kaur et al., 2015).

1. Review of Related Studies

Adolescence is a transformative period where life skills are crucial for navigating academic, social, and emotional challenges. Parenting and the school environment play pivotal roles in shaping these skills. The influence of parental behavior on adolescents in Kashmir, observing significant gender-based differences. Similarly, Dhingra and Chauhan (2017) underscored the positive impact of parents' educational attainment on adolescents' life skills, showcasing the importance of educated parents in fostering holistic growth. Boonk et al. (2018) found a strong association between parental involvement and academic success, emphasizing the role of active parental engagement in nurturing essential life skills.

Tosten et al. (2017) identified supportive parenting as a key factor in enhancing adolescents' problem-solving and decision-making abilities, whereas authoritarian approaches showed limited benefits. Choudhary and Gulati (2015) conducted a comprehensive review on the interplay between family, school environments, and socioeconomic status, concluding that these factors are instrumental in adolescents' academic and emotional development. The findings align with previous research that highlighted life skills education's role in improving personal and social adjustment, thereby mitigating pressures like substance use.

Bancin and Ambarita (2019) focused on life skills training, demonstrating its effectiveness in boosting self-confidence, critical thinking, and mental health. The value of life skills-based approaches in raising environmental awareness among secondary school students. Das (2021) explored the implementation of teaching strategies like role-playing and brainstorming, which significantly enhanced emotional resilience, decision-making, and critical thinking.

The role of school environments in life skills development

has been extensively studied. Godson and Ngussa (2020) highlighted that supportive educational settings promote student commitment to learning. Kirchhoff and Keller (2021) emphasized the importance of schools in fostering self-regulation and decision-making abilities, echoing earlier findings on supportive educational settings. Araúz-Ledezma et al. (2020) advocated for integrating social-emotional learning and sexuality education into school curricula, emphasizing their impact on adolescent health and well-being.

Recent studies provide deeper insights into parental roles. Vidal et al. (2023) linked parental engagement to critical thinking development. Bao et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of strong familial bonds in reducing risk-taking behaviors. Zimmer-Gembeck et al. (2023) emphasized the critical role of parental support in stress management. Gu and Zhang (2022) explored how positive parent-child interactions, mediated by peer relationships, enhance emotional well-being. He et al. (2024) demonstrated that empathetic parenting fosters creativity. Moradi et al. (2024) emphasized the role of intellectual curiosity and constructive family discussions in nurturing critical thinking.

2. Need and Significance of the Study

Adolescence is a crucial phase for developing life skills that contribute to emotional well-being, academic success, and future adaptability. In the context of Nainital District, where socio-economic and educational environments vary significantly, it is essential to understand the factors influencing life skills development. As a semi-urban region with diverse cultural influences, Nainital presents unique parenting practices and school environments that shape adolescents' growth (Kaur & Kalaramna, 2004). However, existing research lacks a focused analysis of how these factors interact in this specific region. Differences in parental occupations, family structures, and school conditions create varied learning experiences for students, highlighting the need for an in-depth study on their impact. While life skills has been widely studied, limited research have explored their relationship with family and school environments in Nainital District.

This study is highly relevant as it provides insights for shaping educational policies in Uttarakhand by emphasizing the role of parental involvement and well-supported school systems in life skills development. Understanding the interaction between family and school environments can help in designing targeted interventions that enhance adolescents' life skills, ultimately improving their academic performance, mental health, and social adaptability. This research will serve as a foundation for future studies on life skills education in similar socio-cultural and economic settings (Kaur et al., 2015). By addressing these gaps, the study aims to contribute valuable insights that will strengthen life skills development among adolescents, ensuring their overall growth and success.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To study the relationship between life skills of adolescents and their parent-child relationship.
- To study the relationship between life skills of adolescents and their school environment.

4. Hypothesis

- *Hypothesis 1:* There is no significant relationship between the life skills of adolescents and the father-child relationship.
- *Hypothesis 2:* There is no significant relationship between the life skills of adolescents and the mother-child relationship.
- *Hypothesis 3:* There is no significant relationship between the life skills of adolescents and the school environment.

5. Research Methodology

In the present investigation, a descriptive survey method was employed to examine the relationship between life skills of adolescents, parent-child relationships, and the school environment. The study was conducted in the Nainital district of Uttarakhand, specifically involving government secondary school students from classes 9th and 10th across four blocks of the district (Kumari et al., 2019).

5.1 Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of adolescent

students studying in classes 9 and 10 in government secondary schools within the four blocks of Nainital district. A total of 800 adolescents were selected as the sample using the simple random sampling technique.

5.2 Data Collection Instruments

To collect data for the analysis, the investigator utilized the following three instruments:

- *Parent-Child Relationship Scale (PCRS):* This scale assesses the quality of the parent-child relationship under ten dimensions: protecting, symbolic punishment, rejecting, object punishment, demanding, indifferent, symbolic reward, loving, object reward, & neglecting.
- *School Environment Inventory (SEI):* This inventory measures various aspects of the school environment, such as infrastructure, teacher support, peer interactions, and the overall learning atmosphere, under six dimensions: creative stimulation, cognitive encouragement, acceptance, permissiveness, rejection, and control.
- *Life Skills Assessment Questionnaire (LSAQ):* This questionnaire, developed by the researcher, assesses the life skills of adolescents based on whose core life skills. It includes the following dimensions: critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making & problem-solving skills, interpersonal relationships & communication skills, empathy, self-awareness, and stress management. The reliability of the LSAQ was assessed using the split-half technique and Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with an overall value of 0.80, indicating good internal consistency. The tool's validity was established through expert reviews (face validity), focus group discussions (content validity), and parallel validation. For parallel validation, Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated between LSAQ and a previously standardized life skills scale by Rena Tewari, Assistant Professor at Matagujari Mahavidyalaya, Jabalpur. The obtained correlation of +0.758 was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, confirming the strong validity of LSAQ.
- *Personal Data Sheet:* A supplementary tool created

by the investigator to gather demographic and background information of the students, such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, and parental occupation.

5.3 Procedure

Data were collected in a structured manner by administering the above instruments to the selected sample of students. All necessary permissions from school authorities were obtained before conducting the survey. The instruments were distributed and explained to the participants to ensure clarity and avoid confusion during the process.

Simple random sampling was conducted using the fishbowl technique, where adolescents picked folded slips marked as "selected" or "rejected" from a shuffled bowl. To maintain a balanced sample, the cumulative selection from each block was capped at 200 (100 male and 100 female). The number of marked slips was adjusted based on enrollment and attendance, ensuring approximately one selected slip for every five adolescents in each school.

5.4 Data Analysis

The data collected from the above instruments were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods to examine the relationships between adolescents' life skills, their parent-child relationships, and the school environment.

5.4.1 Relationship between Life Skills and Parent-Child Relationship of Adolescents

To examine the relationship between life skills and the parent-child relationship of adolescents, Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated with the help of SPSS software (Kirchhoff & Keller, 2021).

5.4.1.1 Life Skills and Father-Child Relationship

The Pearson correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between life skills and the father-child relationship of adolescents; analyzed data was shown in Table 1. The result revealed that no significant relationship exists between the life skills of adolescents and the total father-child relationship, while all ten dimensions of the father-child relationship were significantly correlated with

S. No.	Father-Child Relationship and its Dimensions	Life Skills Pearson Correlation	Significance Level (0.05)
1	Protecting	0.212	Significant
2	Symbolic Punishment	-0.098	Significant
3	Rejecting	-0.169	Significant
4	Object Punishment	-0.191	Significant
5	Demanding	-0.082	Significant
6	Indifferent	-0.147	Significant
7	Symbolic Reward	0.165	Significant
8	Loving	0.143	Significant
9	Object Reward	0.126	Significant
10	Neglecting	-0.225	Significant
11	Father-Child Relationship	-0.057	Not-significant

Table 1. Relationship between Life Skills and Father-Child Relationship among Adolescents

the life skills of adolescents. The correlation coefficient of life skills with protecting ($r=.212$), symbolic reward ($r=.165$), loving ($r=.143$), and object reward ($r=.126$) dimensions of father-child relationship were positively correlated and significant at the 0.05 level of significance. This divulges that there is a significant positive correlation between the life skills of adolescents and protecting, symbolic reward, object reward, and loving dimensions of the father-child relationship. The correlation coefficient of life skills with symbolic punishment ($r=-.098$), rejecting ($r=-.169$), object punishment ($r=-.191$), demanding ($r=-.082$), indifferent ($r=-.147$), and neglecting ($r=-.225$) dimensions of father-child relationship were negatively correlated and significant at the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there exists a significant but negative relationship between the life skills of adolescents and symbolic punishment, rejecting, object punishment, demanding, indifferent, and neglecting dimensions of father-child relationships.

5.4.1.2 Life Skills and Mother-Child Relationship

To ascertain the relation between life skills and the mother-child relationship and life skills and ten dimensions of the mother-child relationship, Pearson correlation analysis was carried out for 800 adolescents. Analyzed data were shown in Table 2. The result uncovered that a non-significant relationship occurred between the life skills of adolescents with mother-child relationships, whereas the life skills of adolescents with ten dimensions of mother-child relationships were significantly correlated. The

S. No.	Mother-Child Relationship and its Dimensions	Life Skills Pearson Correlation	Significance Level (0.05)
1	Protecting	0.170	Significant
2	Symbolic Punishment	-0.078	Significant
3	Rejecting	-0.191	Significant
4	Object Punishment	-0.157	Significant
5	Demanding	-0.080	Significant
6	Indifferent	-0.123	Significant
7	Symbolic Reward	0.152	Significant
8	Loving	0.146	Significant
9	Object Reward	0.114	Significant
10	Neglecting	-0.210	Significant
11	Mother-Child Relationship	-0.049	Not- significant

Table 2. Relationship between Life Skills and Mother-Child Relationship among Adolescents

correlation coefficient indicated that life skills of adolescents were positively correlated and significant at the 0.05 level of significance with four dimensions of mother-child relationship protecting, i.e., symbolic reward ($r = .152$), loving ($r = .146$), and object reward ($r = .144$). It reveals that there is a significant positive correlation between the life skills of adolescents and protecting, symbolic reward, object reward, and loving dimensions of the mother-child relationship. It also depicts the correlation coefficient of life skills with symbolic punishment ($r=0.78$), rejecting ($r=-.191$), object punishment ($r=-.157$), demanding ($r=-.080$), indifferent ($r=-.123$), and neglecting ($r=-.210$), and they were significant at the 0.05 level of significance; this inferred that these dimensions of the mother-child relationship were negatively correlated with the life skills of adolescents.

The rationale behind the above finding could be that protective and supportive parents provide proper guidance for the learning and development of the child, support the child to build self-confidence and wisdom, and help the child to develop less impulsive and more thoughtful behavior. Symbolic and object rewards by parents encourage and motivate children to do better and improve and offer moral support. The love and affection of parents towards their children help children to build a sense of security and safety and provide emotional and social competencies. Whereas rejection of parents causes emotional pain and negative impact on the socio-emotional development of children,

neglectful and indifferent parenting causes depression, anxiety, and insecurity in children, and punishment decreases self-esteem and sense of safety and increases aggression and abusive behavior.

Dasgupta and Sain (2015) found that the supportive and loving environment of family plays a significant role in the development of life skills and also found the negative correlation of life skills with controlling and active recreational orientation dimensions of family environment. Kumari and Kotian (2024) found a positive correlation between parent-child relationships and high academic achievement. Bansal (2016) observed a significant correlation between family environment and self-esteem of secondary students. A healthy and positive family environment is positively correlated to the self-esteem of the adolescents, while conflicts in the family are negatively correlated to the self-esteem of adolescents. Kaur (2015) studied that the life skills of secondary school students differ with parental involvement; high parental involvement increases the level of life skills; they further concluded that the close relation to the parents helps the students to manage their emotions, increase self-esteem and self-confidence, and social competencies. Sathyabhama and Eljo (2016) found a significant positive correlation between family interaction and life skills of adolescent girls. Kaur (2015) also found the positive correlation between family environment and life skills. Mukhopadhyay and Parhar (1999) concluded the cordial parent-child relationship contributes to the influence on the healthy psychological and physiological development of adolescents.

5.4.2 Relationship between Life Skills and School Environment of Adolescents

Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between life skills and the school environment among adolescents. Table 3 shows the correlation coefficient of life skills of adolescents with the six dimensions (i.e., creative stimulation, cognitive encouragement, acceptance, permissiveness, rejection, and control) of school environment. Findings revealed that there was a significant positive correlation between the life skills of adolescents and creative

S. No.	Dimensions of School Environment	Life Skills Pearson Correlation	Significance Level (0.05)
1	Creative Stimulation	0.100	Significant
2	Cognitive Encouragement	0.104	Significant
3	Acceptance	0.119	Significant
4	Permissiveness	0.029	Not-significant
5	Rejection	-0.142	Significant
6	Control	0.066	Not-significant

Table 3. Relationship between Life Skills and School Environment among Adolescents

stimulation ($r = 0.100$), cognitive encouragement ($r = 0.104$), and acceptance ($r = 0.119$) dimensions, whereas a significant negative correlation was found in the rejection ($r = -0.142$) dimension at the 0.05 level of significance. It indicates that creative stimulation, cognitive encouragement, and acceptance of the school environment enhance the life skills of secondary school students, while rejecting the school environment suppresses the development of life skills. Findings also show that there was no significant correlation between the life skills of adolescents and the permissiveness and control dimensions of the school environment.

The findings of the present study suggest that modern teaching and learning strategies are child-centered, and teachers use more effective teaching methods like brainstorming, discussion, role-play, storytelling, projectors, etc., which provide students various opportunities and situations to develop creative thinking abilities, communication skills, leadership qualities, social competencies, etc. The empathetic nature of teachers stimulates the cognitive and affective development of students. The teacher's unconditional love helps the students to express their feelings and thoughts. Whereas rejection in school and the classroom suppresses their self-confidence and uniqueness.

The findings are supported by the findings of Kaur, who concluded that the findings of co-curricular activities of schools played an important role in developing self-confidence and communication skills of secondary school students (Kaur, 2015). Kaur (2015) found a positive correlation between life skills and the school environment of secondary school students. Meyer (2015) studied that project-based learning in schools helps to develop life

skills in students. Jisha (2016) concluded that the vocational high schools developed a high level of life skills as compared to non-vocational high schools. Wilson (2009) found the positive association of co-curricular activities with learning skills.

6. Educational Implications

- *Integration of Life Skills Education:* Schools should incorporate structured life skills education into the curriculum to enhance critical thinking, decision-making, and emotional resilience among adolescents.
- *Parenting Workshops:* Regular parenting workshops should be conducted to educate parents about the impact of positive parenting practices on their children's life skills development.
- *Teacher Training Programs:* Teachers should be trained to create a supportive and interactive learning environment that fosters students' interpersonal and problem-solving skills.
- *Holistic School Environment:* Schools should emphasize a conducive learning atmosphere that promotes cognitive encouragement, creative stimulation, and emotional well-being.
- *Collaboration between Schools and Parents:* Schools should actively involve parents in their children's education through regular meetings, counseling sessions, and joint activities to strengthen the parent-child relationship.
- *Support Systems for At-Risk Adolescents:* Schools and communities should implement support mechanisms such as mentorship programs and peer counseling for students experiencing neglect or harsh parental discipline.

7. Recommendations

- *Policy Formulation:* The government and educational policymakers should design policies that mandate life skills education as a core component of the school curriculum.
- *Parental Awareness Campaigns:* Awareness programs should be launched to educate parents

about the adverse effects of neglect and punitive discipline on adolescent development.

- *School-based Interventions:* Schools should introduce structured interventions such as peer learning groups, student clubs, and extracurricular activities to develop essential life skills.
- *Monitoring and Evaluation:* Regular assessment of students' life skills should be conducted using validated tools to track progress and make necessary curriculum adjustments.
- *Community Engagement:* Collaboration with community organizations and NGOs can help in providing life skills training and support systems beyond school settings.
- *Further Research:* More studies should be conducted to explore additional factors affecting life skills development, such as cultural influences and socio-economic status.

Conclusion

The analysis presented in this study reveals significant insights into the relationship between life skills and various environmental factors, including the parent-child relationship and school environment, among adolescents. The study demonstrates that the dimensions of the father-child relationship, such as protecting, symbolic reward, loving, and object reward, are positively correlated with the life skills of adolescents. On the other hand, dimensions like symbolic punishment, rejecting, and neglecting are negatively correlated, highlighting the impact of supportive versus neglectful parenting on the development of life skills. Similarly, the mother-child relationship shows a positive correlation with dimensions like protecting, symbolic reward, and loving, while negative correlations were observed with rejecting and neglecting behaviors.

In terms of school environment, the findings show a positive relationship between life skills and dimensions such as creative stimulation, cognitive encouragement, and acceptance. These dimensions play a significant role in enhancing students' life skills, while the rejection dimension has a negative impact, suggesting that a

supportive and encouraging school environment nurtures the development of core life skills among adolescents.

Overall, the positive and supportive family and school environment significantly contributes to the development of core life skills in adolescents. These findings align with previous studies that emphasize the importance of a nurturing family environment and an engaging school setting for the holistic development of secondary school students. In conclusion, fostering positive parent-child relationships and an encouraging school atmosphere is crucial for enhancing life skills, which, in turn, play a vital role in students' personal and academic growth.

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