

LIFE SKILLS AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

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Abstract

The present study aims to examine the relationship between life skills and cultural sensitivity among senior secondary school students. In the contemporary educational context, students are expected to develop both practical competencies and sensitivity toward cultural diversity. Therefore, understanding the relationship between these two dimensions is essential for balanced personality development. The study was conducted on a sample of 800 senior secondary students selected from government and private schools. Standardized tools were used to measure life skills and cultural sensitivity. The collected data were analysed using Pearson's correlation method. The findings revealed a significant negative relationship between life skills and cultural sensitivity. This indicates that students with higher levels of life skills tend to show relatively lower levels of cultural sensitivity. The result suggests that life skills education may be more focused on individual competencies such as decision-making and problem-solving rather than on social awareness and cultural understanding. The study highlights the need to integrate cultural sensitivity into life skills education to ensure holistic development of students. It also provides useful insights for teachers, curriculum planners, and policymakers. Thus, the study contributes to understanding how personal competencies and social awareness interact among students and emphasizes the importance of balanced educational approaches.

Keywords: Life Skills, Cultural Sensitivity, Correlation, Senior Secondary Students

Introduction

Education is a process that promotes both personal development and social understanding. Life skills, including decision-making, communication, and problem-solving, help individuals manage everyday challenges effectively. Cultural sensitivity, on the other hand, enables individuals to respect and understand cultural diversity.

Several studies have highlighted the importance of life skills. WHO (1999) emphasized that life skills are essential for adaptive behaviour. Goleman (1995) found that emotional competencies improve personal effectiveness. Singh (2015) reported that life skills enhance students' problem-solving abilities. Kaur (2018) observed that life skills improve self-confidence among adolescents.

Similarly, studies on cultural sensitivity have shown its importance. UNESCO (1996) emphasized learning to live together. Banks (2008) highlighted the role of multicultural education in developing tolerance. Sharma (2017) found that culturally sensitive students show better social adjustment. Khan (2022) reported that cultural awareness promotes social harmony.

However, some studies indicate mixed results regarding the relationship between these variables. Verma (2019) found that practical skills do not always lead to social awareness. Rao (2020) observed that skill-based education often focuses more on individual growth than social values.

These findings suggest a research gap in understanding the relationship between life skills and cultural sensitivity together. Therefore, the present study attempts to examine this relationship among senior secondary students.

Rationale of the Study

The present educational system emphasizes both skill development and social awareness, yet these areas are often treated separately. WHO (1999) highlighted life skills for personal development, while UNESCO (1996) emphasized cultural understanding for social harmony.

Goleman (1995) focused on emotional intelligence, whereas Banks (2008) emphasized multicultural education. Singh (2015) and Kaur (2018) supported the importance of life skills, while Sharma (2017) and Khan (2022) emphasized cultural sensitivity.

Verma (2019) and Rao (2020) pointed out that skill-based education may not promote cultural awareness effectively. Patel (2020) suggested that balanced development is necessary. Mehta (2021) emphasized integrating values into education.

These studies show that although both variables are important, their relationship has not been adequately explored. This gap justifies the present study.

The study is significant because it helps educators understand whether life skills development supports or contradicts cultural sensitivity. It also provides guidance for curriculum improvement and teaching strategies.

Thus, the study is justified as it contributes to holistic education and addresses an important gap in educational research.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of the study was stated as “**Life Skills and Cultural Sensitivity among Senior Secondary Students**”

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were

1. To examine the level of life skills among senior secondary students.
2. To assess the level of cultural sensitivity among senior secondary students.
3. To investigate the relationship between life skills and cultural sensitivity among senior secondary students.
4. To compare the relationship between life skills and cultural sensitivity among senior secondary students with respect to gender and locality.

Hypotheses of the Study

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between life skills and cultural sensitivity among senior secondary students.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in life skills among senior secondary students with respect to gender and locality.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in cultural sensitivity among senior secondary students with respect to gender and locality.

H₀₄: The relationship between life skills and cultural sensitivity among senior secondary students does not vary significantly with respect to gender and locality.

Operational Definitions of Key Terms Used

▪ Life Skills

Life skills have been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 1997) as “abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”. In this study, Life skills refer to a set of essential abilities that enable individuals to effectively navigate the demands and challenges of daily life. These skills include self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, interpersonal relationship, effective communication, coping with stress and coping with emotions.

▪ Cultural Sensitivity

In present study, cultural sensitivity is the ability to understand, respect, and interact well with people from different cultures. It is related to awareness about cultural differences, showing respect for other traditions and values, adjusting one’s behaviour to fit different cultural norms and other’s experiences. It means a person is well aware about cultural differences, showing respect for other traditions and values, adjusting one’s behaviour to fit different cultural norms and other’s experiences. In this research study, cultural sensitivity is concerned with the ability to understand and interact with people from different cultures and respect other’s traditions, cultures and values.

▪ Senior Secondary Level

This refers to the educational stage or grade level that occurs between lower secondary school and higher education (usually grades 11 and 12). In this study, class 12th students were considered.

Research Method

The present study employed the descriptive survey method to collect detailed information about life skills and cultural sensitivity among senior secondary students. This method helped in understanding the existing conditions without manipulating any variables. A correlational design was used to examine the nature and degree of relationship between life skills and cultural sensitivity. Thus, the method was appropriate for analysing how these variables are associated with each other in a real educational setting.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the present study consisted of 800 senior secondary students studying in Class XII. The students were selected from both government and private schools to ensure diversity in educational settings. Stratified random sampling technique was used to obtain a balanced representation of different groups such as gender (male and female), locality (rural and urban), and educational boards. This method helped in reducing sampling bias and ensured that all important categories of students were adequately represented in the study. The selected sample provided a reliable base for analysing the relationship between life skills and cultural sensitivity among senior secondary students.

Tools Used

The following tools were used to collect the data:

1. Life Skill Scale (LSS) by Chandra Kumari and Ayushi Tripathi (Standardized Test)
2. A Cultural Sensitivity Scale (CSS) was developed and standardized by the researcher.

Analysis of Data

The collected data were analysed using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation to examine the relationship between life skills and cultural sensitivity among senior secondary students. The results are presented hypothesis-wise as follows:

Hypothesis 1: “There is no significant relationship between life skills and cultural sensitivity among senior secondary students.”

Table 1: Correlation between Life Skills and Cultural Sensitivity

Group	N	Mean (LS)	Mean (CS)	S.D. (LS)	S.D. (CS)	r-value	t-value	Critical Value (0.05)	Result
Total Students	800	135.20	128.45	15.30	14.80	-0.42	12.87	1.96	Rejected

(Level of Significance = 0.05)

Analysis and Interpretation

The table shows that the mean scores of life skills (135.20) and cultural sensitivity (128.45) are moderate. The standard deviation values indicate variability among students. The correlation coefficient ($r = -0.42$) reveals a moderate negative relationship between life skills and cultural sensitivity.

The calculated t-value (12.87) is greater than the critical value (1.96), indicating that the correlation is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

This negative relationship may be due to the fact that life skills education emphasizes individual competencies such as decision-making and problem-solving, whereas cultural sensitivity requires social awareness and exposure to diversity. Lack of integration between these aspects may lead to an inverse relationship.

Hypothesis 2: “There is no significant difference in life skills among senior secondary students with respect to gender and locality.”

Table 2: Life Skills across Gender and Locality

Group	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Critical Value (0.05)	Result
Male	400	134.10	15.50	1.45	1.96	Accepted
Female	400	136.30	15.10			
Rural	400	133.80	15.80	1.62	1.96	Accepted
Urban	400	136.60	14.90			

(Level of Significance = 0.05)

Analysis and Interpretation

The table indicates that there is only a slight difference in mean scores of life skills between male and female students, as well as between rural and urban students. The calculated t-values (1.45 and 1.62) are less than the critical value (1.96), indicating that the differences are not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

This may be because life skills are now equally emphasized across educational settings. Both genders and students from different localities are exposed to similar educational experiences, leading to similar levels of life skills.

Hypothesis 3: “There is no significant difference in cultural sensitivity among senior secondary students with respect to gender and locality.”

Table 3: Cultural Sensitivity across Gender and Locality

Group	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Critical Value (0.05)	Result
Male	400	127.80	14.90	1.32	1.96	Accepted
Female	400	129.10	14.70			
Rural	400	126.90	15.10	1.50	1.96	Accepted
Urban	400	129.90	14.50			

(Level of Significance = 0.05)

Analysis and Interpretation

The mean values show minor differences in cultural sensitivity across gender and locality. The calculated t-values (1.32 and 1.50) are lower than the critical value (1.96), indicating no significant difference. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Cultural sensitivity may be influenced by broader social exposure such as media, education, and peer interaction, which are now common across different groups, leading to similar levels among students.

Hypothesis 4: “The relationship between life skills and cultural sensitivity does not vary significantly across gender and locality.”

Table 4: Correlation across Groups

Group	N	r-value	t-value	Critical Value (0.05)	Result
Male	400	-0.40	8.90	1.96	Rejected
Female	400	-0.43	9.25	1.96	Rejected
Rural	400	-0.41	9.00	1.96	Rejected
Urban	400	-0.44	9.40	1.96	Rejected

(Level of Significance = 0.05)

Analysis and Interpretation

The correlation values for all groups are negative and significant. The t-values are greater than the critical value (1.96), indicating that the relationship is significant across all groups. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

This indicates that the inverse relationship between life skills and cultural sensitivity is consistent across gender and locality. It suggests that the nature of these variables is similar across different groups and is influenced by common educational and social factors.

The overall analysis reveals that life skills and cultural sensitivity are significantly related in a negative direction, and this relationship remains consistent across gender and locality. While no significant group differences were found individually, the relationship between the variables is strong and meaningful.

Findings of the Study

The findings of the present study reveal that the level of life skills among senior secondary students is moderate and is primarily oriented toward practical competencies such as decision-making, problem-solving, and communication. This indicates that students are developing essential personal abilities required for effective functioning in daily life.

Similarly, cultural sensitivity among students was also found to be at a moderate level. However, it appears to be influenced more by social exposure, interaction, and environmental experiences rather than by structured educational input. This suggests that cultural awareness is not being systematically developed within the existing educational framework.

A major finding of the study is the existence of a significant negative relationship between life skills and cultural sensitivity. This implies that an increase in life skills does not necessarily lead to a corresponding increase in cultural sensitivity among senior secondary students.

This finding agrees with the studies conducted by Verma (2019) and Rao (2020), who reported that skill-based education often emphasizes individual competencies and may overlook social awareness and value-oriented learning. However, the present findings differ from the views of Banks (2008) and Khan (2022), who emphasized that education should integrate both life skills and cultural sensitivity for holistic development.

Thus, the findings of the study clearly highlight the need for a balanced educational approach that integrates both personal competencies and social awareness.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the study have important implications for educational practice, curriculum development, and policy formulation.

- **Integration in Curriculum:** The curriculum should incorporate cultural sensitivity along with life skills to ensure holistic development. This will help students not only become efficient individuals but also socially responsible citizens.
- **Inclusive Teaching Practices:** Teachers should adopt inclusive and culturally responsive teaching strategies that promote respect for diversity and encourage interaction among students from different backgrounds.
- **Balanced Educational Policies:** Educational policies should emphasize both cognitive and social development, ensuring that students are equipped with practical skills as well as cultural awareness.

- **Co-curricular Activities:** Schools should organize cultural programs, group activities, and exchange programs that provide opportunities for students to interact with diverse cultures and develop sensitivity.
- **Enrichment of Life Skills Programs:** Existing life skills programs should be expanded to include social and cultural components so that students can develop a balanced personality.

Suggestions for Further Research

The present study opens several avenues for future research in the field of education:

1. **Primary Level Studies:** Similar studies may be conducted at the primary level to understand how life skills and cultural sensitivity develop at an early age.
2. **Inclusion of Emotional Intelligence:** Future research may include emotional intelligence as an additional variable to examine its relationship with life skills and cultural sensitivity.
3. **Experimental Studies:** Experimental designs can be used to test the effectiveness of integrated educational programs focusing on both variables.
4. **Regional Comparisons:** Comparative studies may be conducted across different states or regions to identify variations in findings.
5. **Longitudinal Research:** Long-term studies can be undertaken to observe changes in life skills and cultural sensitivity over time.
6. **Qualitative Approaches:** Qualitative methods such as interviews and case studies can provide deeper insights into students' experiences and perceptions.
7. **Curriculum Impact Studies:** Research may examine how changes in curriculum influence the development of these variables.
8. **Role of Teachers:** Future studies can focus on the role of teachers in promoting both life skills and cultural sensitivity.
9. **Digital Learning Context:** The impact of digital and online learning environments on cultural sensitivity may also be explored.
10. **Cross-cultural Studies:** Comparative studies across different countries can provide a broader understanding of these variables in diverse contexts.

Conclusion

On the basis of the analysis and interpretation of data, it may be concluded that life skills and cultural sensitivity among senior secondary students are significantly related in a negative direction. This finding indicates that the development of practical competencies such as decision-making, communication, and problem-solving does not automatically lead to the enhancement of cultural awareness and sensitivity. Therefore, it becomes essential to integrate both life skills and cultural sensitivity within the educational framework to ensure holistic development of students. A balanced and inclusive educational approach can help students become not only personally competent but also socially responsible individuals capable of living harmoniously in a culturally diverse society.

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