

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LIFE SKILLS AND HAPPINESS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN LUCKNOW

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ABSTRACT

This study examined gender differences in Life Skills and Happiness among secondary school students and compared overall levels of these constructs. A sample of 200 students (100 boys and 100 girls) completed standardized measures of Life Skills and Happiness. Descriptive statistics indicated that girls scored higher than boys in both domains. For Life Skills, boys ($M = 124.14$, $SD = 13.05$) scored lower than girls ($M = 137.88$, $SD = 15.88$), and for Happiness, boys ($M = 112.96$, $SD = 11.51$) scored slightly lower than girls ($M = 116.60$, $SD = 8.82$). Independent samples t-tests revealed significant gender differences. For Life Skills, $t(198) = -6.683$, $p < .001$, with a mean difference of -13.74 (95% CI $[-17.80, -9.69]$), and for Happiness, $t(185.38) = -2.510$, $p = .013$, with a mean difference of -3.64 (95% CI $[-6.50, -0.78]$). A paired samples t-test comparing Life Skills and Happiness within participants indicated that Life Skills ($M = 131.01$, $SD = 16.05$) were significantly higher than Happiness ($M = 114.78$, $SD = 10.39$), $t(199) = 12.749$, $p < .001$, mean difference = 16.23 (95% CI $[13.72, 18.74]$).

Findings suggest that gender significantly influences Life Skills and Happiness, with girls outperforming boys in both areas. The larger difference in Life Skills highlights the potential role of socialization and school-based skill development, whereas Happiness appears influenced by broader emotional and contextual factors. The higher Life Skills relative to Happiness scores indicate that skill acquisition does not automatically translate into greater well-being, underscoring the importance of interventions targeting emotional and psychological development alongside Life Skills training.

Educationally, the study emphasizes integrating structured Life Skills and well-being programs in schools, with gender-sensitive approaches to address observed disparities. Policy-wise, teacher training in social-emotional learning and student-centered strategies is recommended, alongside inclusive programs balancing academic achievement with mental health and emotional development.

Limitations include the regional sample, cross-sectional design, and reliance on self-report measures. Future research should employ longitudinal and mixed-method designs and assess intervention effectiveness. Overall, the study highlights the importance of fostering both Life Skills and Happiness to support holistic adolescent development.

KEYWORDS: Life skills, Happiness, Gender Differences, Secondary school students,

INTRODUCTION:

The pursuit of happiness has long been a central theme in psychology, philosophy, and education. In recent years, happiness has increasingly been recognized as an important indicator of mental health and overall well-being (Seligman, 2011). For adolescents, particularly those in secondary school, happiness plays a vital role in shaping academic performance, emotional stability, and social development.

Life skills, as defined by the **World Health Organization (WHO, 1997)**, are “abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.” Core life skills such as self-awareness, communication, empathy, problem-solving, decision-making, resilience, and critical thinking are essential not only for academic success but also for promoting psychological well-being and happiness.

In India, secondary school students face increasing academic pressures, competition, and psychosocial challenges. The integration of life skills education within the school curriculum has therefore been strongly advocated in the **National Education Policy (NEP, 2020)**. However, empirical evidence examining the direct relationship between life skills and happiness among secondary school students in the Indian context, especially in Lucknow, remains limited.

The present study seeks to address this gap by examining the impact of life skills on happiness among secondary school students in Lucknow.

Research Problem:

Adolescence is a critical developmental period where individuals face multiple academic, social, and emotional challenges. While happiness and well-being are essential indicators of mental health, secondary school students in India, including Lucknow, often experience stress, anxiety, and reduced life satisfaction due to academic pressures and social expectations. Life skills have been shown to promote psychological well-being, yet there is limited empirical research in the Indian context examining the relationship between life skills and happiness among secondary school students. Understanding this relationship is vital to inform educational interventions and policies aimed at fostering holistic student development.

Research Questions:

“Is there a significant difference in Life Skills and Happiness of secondary school students in Lucknow?”

Research Gap:

Although life skills education has been recognized in the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) and global literature highlights its positive role in adolescent well-being, most research in India has either:

Focused on academic performance rather than psychological well-being, or

Examined general populations without specific attention to secondary school students, or

Relied on small sample sizes and pilot studies, limiting generalizability.

This study addresses the gap by investigating the relationship between life skills and happiness among secondary school students in Lucknow, using a larger sample size (N = 200) and standardized quantitative measures.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Educational Implications: The study provides evidence to support the integration of life skills education into secondary school curricula to enhance students' happiness and well-being.

Policy Implications: Findings can guide school authorities and policymakers in designing programs aligned with NEP 2020 that emphasize holistic development.

Counseling and Intervention: School counselors and psychologists can use the results to identify students with lower life skills and provide targeted interventions to improve happiness and mental health.

Academic Contribution: The research adds to the limited Indian literature on the relationship between life skills and happiness among adolescents, particularly in urban centers like Lucknow.

Objectives of the Study:

- To compare the mean score of life skills of Male and Female secondary school students.
- To compare the mean score of happiness of Male and Female secondary school students.
- To compare the mean score of life skills and happiness of secondary school students.

Hypothesis:

- There is no significant difference between the mean score of life skills of Male and female secondary school students.
- There is no significant difference between the mean score of happiness of Male and female secondary school students.
- There is no significant difference between the mean score of life skills and happiness of secondary school students.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

This study is grounded in **Positive Psychology Theory** and **Life Skills Education Framework**:

1. Positive Psychology Theory (Seligman, 2011):

Positive Psychology emphasizes human strengths and well-being rather than pathology. Happiness and life satisfaction are influenced by personal competencies such as resilience, optimism, and social skills. This theory provides the foundation for understanding how life skills can enhance subjective well-being among adolescents.

2. Life Skills Education Framework (WHO, 1997):

Life Skills Education (LSE) emphasizes adaptive and positive behaviors that enable individuals to manage everyday challenges effectively. Core skills—self-awareness, communication, empathy, decision-making, problem-solving, and resilience—are critical for promoting mental health and happiness.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

The study is based on the premise that **Life Skills**—including problem-solving, decision-making, communication, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills—play a crucial role in shaping the **Happiness** of secondary school students. Gender is considered a moderating factor, as socialization patterns and cultural expectations may influence the acquisition of Life Skills and the subjective experience of Happiness. The framework suggests a direct positive relationship between Life Skills and Happiness, with potential differences in this relationship based on gender.

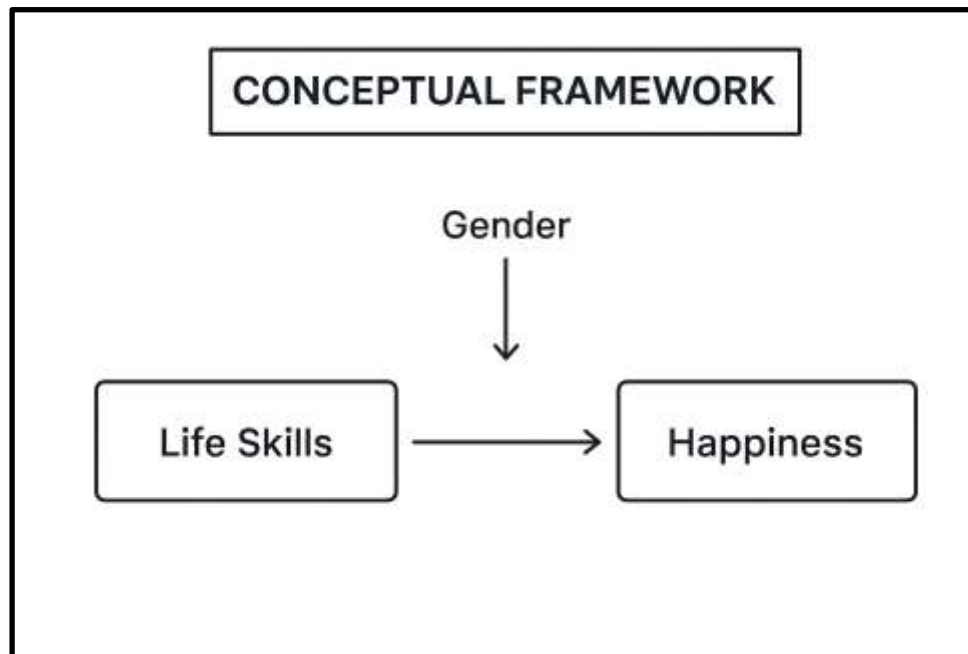


Figure:1 Conceptual Framework

Research Limitations:

1. **Sample Specificity:** Conducted among 200 secondary school students in Lucknow; may limit generalizability to other regions or populations.
2. **Cross-Sectional Design:** Descriptive design does not allow for causal conclusions.
3. **Self-Report Measures:** Possible response bias in questionnaire-based data.
4. **Limited Scope of Life Skills:** Not all potential life skills were assessed.
5. **Contextual Factors:** External influences such as family environment, socio-economic status, and school culture were not controlled.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the past two decades, research has consistently demonstrated the positive impact of life skills on happiness, psychological well-being, and adaptive functioning among students. **Csikszentmihalyi and Hunter (2003)** provided foundational insights into adolescent happiness, employing the Experience Sampling Method with American youth. They found that momentary and trait happiness varied significantly according to daily activities, social interactions, and environmental contexts. School-related tasks were associated with lower happiness, whereas social, active, and leisure activities correlated with higher happiness. Additionally, traits such as pride, sociability, activity, and experiences of flow emerged as strong predictors of overall well-being, underscoring the role of social and emotional competencies—skills that are central to life skills education—in shaping adolescent happiness.

Subsequent intervention-based studies have examined the effectiveness of structured life skills programs on student well-being. **Mahdavi Haji, Mohammadkhani, and Hahtami (2011)** conducted a quasi-experimental study with 26 students from Tarbiat Moallem University to investigate the impact of life skills training on happiness, quality of life, and emotion regulation. The experimental group participated in sessions addressing coping with negative moods, effective relationships, assertiveness, anger management, and stress management. Results demonstrated significant improvements in happiness, emotion regulation, and quality of life in psychological, social, and situational domains, highlighting the efficacy of structured life skills interventions in enhancing adolescents' emotional and social well-being.

McCabe, Bray, and Gelbar (2011) reviewed the application of positive psychology interventions in school settings, emphasizing that targeted, school-based programs can promote happiness and life satisfaction. An exploratory study by **McCabe-Fitch (2009)** showed that exercises such as the **Gratitude Letter** and **Three Good Things in Life** effectively increased positive affect and life satisfaction in children and adolescents. These findings suggest that structured, skill-based interventions can meaningfully contribute to students' emotional well-being.

Parallel research in Iran examined the effect of life skills training on subjective well-being and self-esteem among adolescents. **Sadr-Mohammadi, Kalantari, and Molavi (2014)** investigated high school female students and found that eight sessions of life skills training significantly enhanced subjective well-being, particularly in overall well-being, neurosis, stress-depression, vitality, and life determination. Similarly, **Esmacilinasab, Mohamadi, Ghiasvand, and Bahrami (2011)** reported that life skills training produced significant increases in self-esteem

among 160 high school students in Karaj, Iran, indicating that psychoeducational programs can reduce academic and behavioral challenges by fostering essential personal competencies.

Gupta, Sharma, and Shukla (2025) evaluated India’s **NEEEV (New Era of Entrepreneurial Ecosystem & Vision) programme**, which replaced the Happiness Curriculum in Delhi government schools with a focus on digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and experiential learning. While the programme promoted practical competencies and innovation, the partial replacement of the Happiness Curriculum raised concerns regarding the marginalization of emotional well-being. The study emphasized that structured life skills and emotional competencies remain critical for holistic student development, particularly in educational reforms that prioritize skill-based outcomes.

More recently, **Au, Caltabiano, and Vaksman (2023)** examined the influence of resilience, time management, sense of belonging, and academic performance on psychological well-being among 141 university students. Findings indicated that resilience significantly predicted overall well-being, while both resilience and time management predicted environmental mastery and autonomy, with time management being particularly influential. Sense of belonging and academic performance contributed minimally to self-acceptance. The authors suggested that experimental interventions targeting these life skills could enhance psychological well-being, further supporting the critical role of life skills in promoting happiness.

Collectively, these studies highlight a robust empirical and theoretical foundation for examining the relationship between life skills and happiness. They suggest that interventions targeting resilience, emotional regulation, social competencies, and practical skills can foster positive emotional outcomes among adolescents, providing a strong rationale for the present study investigating life skills and happiness among secondary school students in Lucknow.

METHODOLOGY:

Research Design:

The study employed quantitative comparative research to examine the Life Skills and Happiness of secondary school students in Lucknow.

Sample:

A total of 200 secondary school students (ages 14–17) from selected schools in Lucknow participated in the study. The sample was chosen using stratified random sampling technique.

Tools Used:

1. **Life Skills Assessment Scale** – Life Skills Scale developed by Dr. Chandra Kumari and Ms. Ayushi covering domains such as self-awareness, communication, empathy, decision-making, and resilience.
2. **Happiness Questionnaire** –Happiness Questionnaire developed by Dr.R.L.Bharadwaj and Dr.Poonam R. Das, to measure levels of happiness among students

Procedure:

The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained. Standardized questionnaires were administered, and responses were collected anonymously to ensure confidentiality.

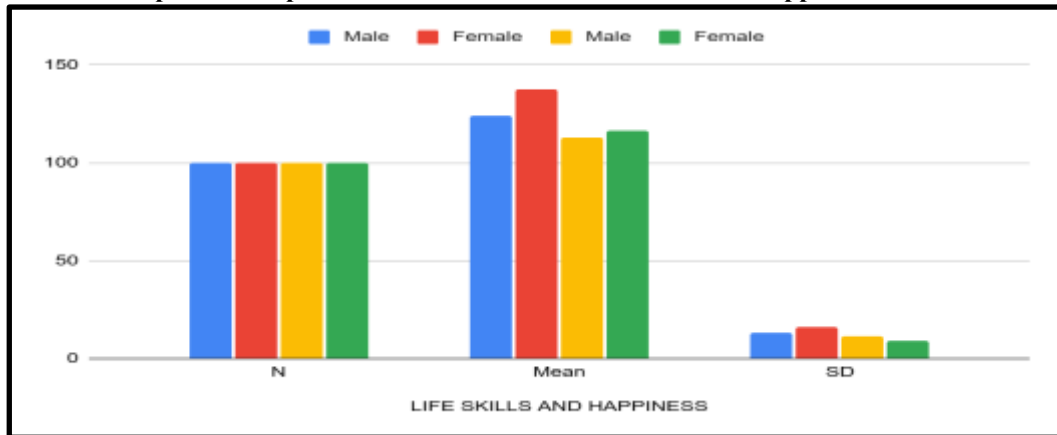
Statistical Analysis:

Data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (mean, SD) were computed. And **paired samples t-test** to compare Life Skills and Happiness within students, and **independent samples t-test** to examine gender-based differences. **95% confidence intervals** were also calculated to assess the precision of the observed differences.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Life Skills, Gender, and Happiness Gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD
Life Skills	Male	100	124.14	13.05
Life Skills	Female	100	137.88	15.88
Happiness	Male	100	112.96	11.51
Happiness	Female	100	116.60	8.82

Graph:1 Descriptive Statistics of Life Skills Gender and Happiness Gender



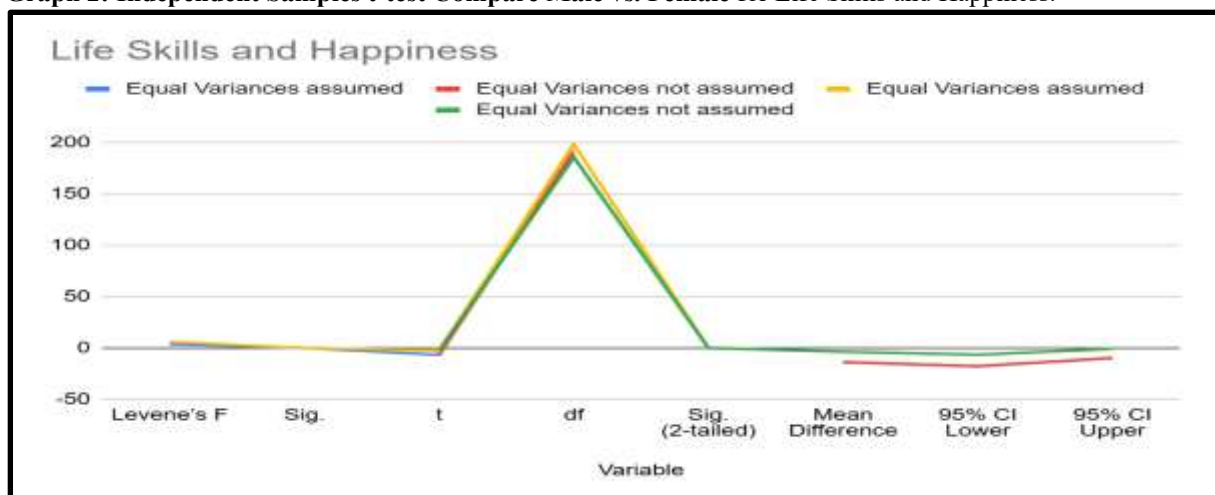
Findings:

Descriptive analysis was conducted to examine Life Skills and Happiness scores of secondary school students. The results indicated that Girls scored higher than Boys in both variables. For Life Skills, Boys (M = 124.14, SD = 13.05) scored lower than Girls (M = 137.88, SD = 15.88). For Happiness, Boys (M = 112.96, SD = 11.51) also scored lower than Girls (M = 116.60, SD = 8.82). The gender difference appeared more substantial in Life Skills than in Happiness.

Table 2: Independent Samples t-test Compare Male vs. Female for Life Skills and Happiness.

Variable		Levene's F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Life Skills	Equal Variances assumed	3.698	.056	-6.683	198	<.001	-13.740	-17.795	-9.685
	Equal Variances not assumed			-6.683	190.880	<.001	-13.740	-17.795	-9.685
Happiness	Equal Variances assumed	6.135	.014	-2.510	198	.013	-3.640	-6.500	-.780
	Equal Variances not assumed			-2.510	185.377	.013	-3.640	-6.501	-.779

Graph 2: Independent Samples t-test Compare Male vs. Female for Life Skills and Happiness.



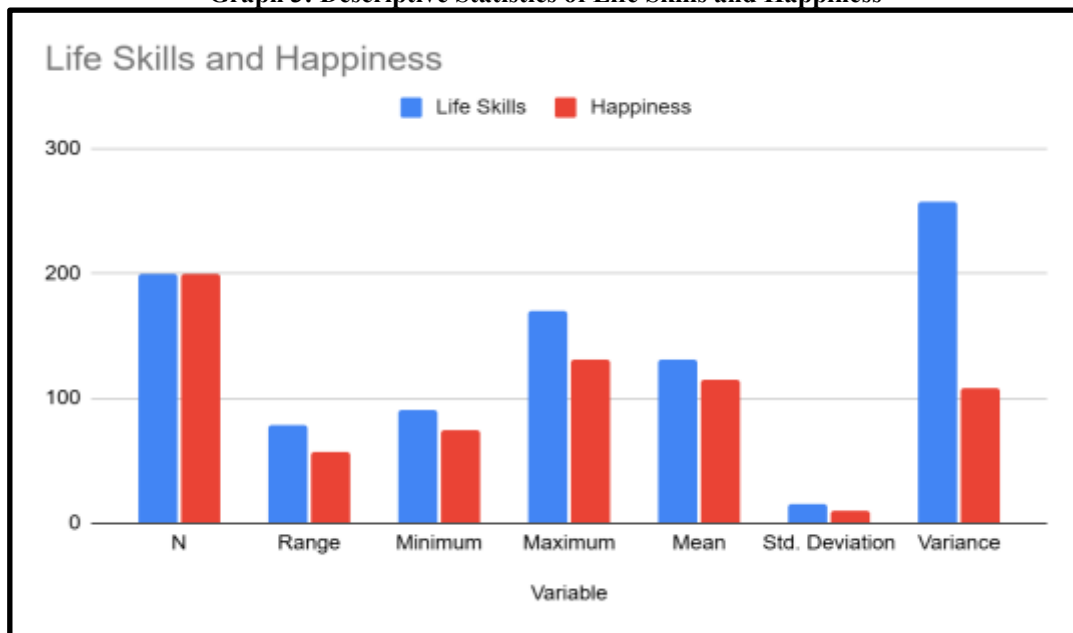
Findings:

- For Life Skills, Levene’s Test indicated equal variances ($F = 3.698, p = .056$). The t-test showed a significant difference, $t(198) = -6.683, p < .001$, with a mean difference of -13.74 , 95% CI $[-17.80, -9.69]$. Girls scored significantly higher than Boys.
- For Happiness, Levene’s Test indicated unequal variances ($F = 6.135, p = .014$). The t-test without assuming equal variances showed a significant difference, $t(185.38) = -2.510, p = .013$, with a mean difference of -3.64 , 95% CI $[-6.50, -0.78]$. Again, Girls reported higher Happiness than Boys, although the effect was smaller compared to Life Skills.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Life Skills and Happiness

Variable	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Life Skills	200	79	91	170	131.01	16.054	257.739
Happiness	200	57	74	131	114.78	10.389	107.931

Graph 3: Descriptive Statistics of Life Skills and Happiness



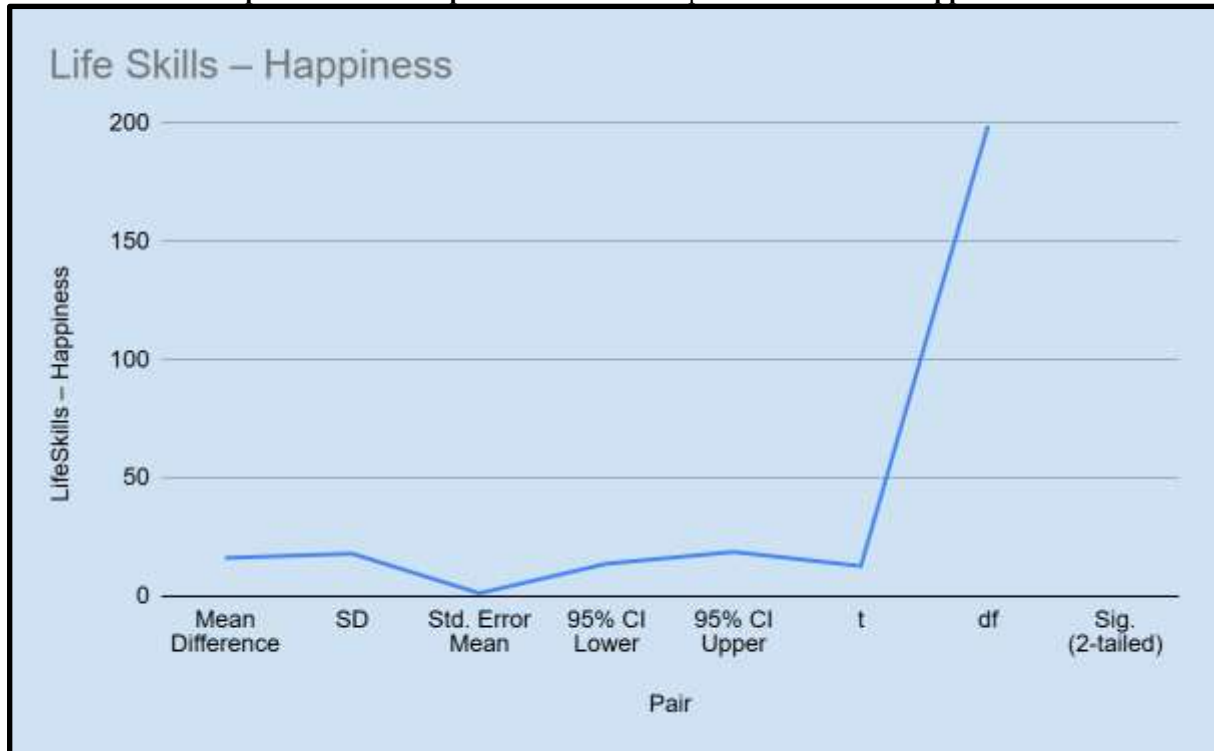
Findings:

Descriptive analysis was conducted to examine Life Skills and Happiness scores of secondary school students. The results indicated that Life Skills, ($M = 131.01, SD = 16.054$) indicate that students generally exhibit **moderate to high levels of life skills**, with considerable variability in scores. and Happiness, ($M = 114.78, SD = 10.389$) reflecting a **moderate level of happiness** with relatively less variation among students. Overall, while life skills varied widely, students’ happiness levels were more consistent.

Table 4: Paired Samples t-test Table Compare Life Skills vs. Happiness

Pair	Mean Difference	SD	Std. Error Mean	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
LifeSkills - Happiness	16.230	18.004	1.273	13.720	18.740	12.749	199	<.001

Graph 4: Paired Samples t-test Table Compare Life Skills vs. Happiness



Findings:

A Paired Samples t-test was conducted to examine the difference between Life Skills and Happiness scores of secondary school students. The results indicated a significant difference, $t(199) = 12.749, p < .001$, with Life Skills scores (M difference = 16.23) being significantly higher than Happiness scores (95% CI [13.72, 18.74]). Thus, the null hypothesis of no difference was rejected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive analysis revealed that female secondary school students scored higher than males in both Life Skills and Happiness. For Life Skills, boys ($M = 124.14, SD = 13.05$) scored lower than girls ($M = 137.88, SD = 15.88$), while for Happiness, boys ($M = 112.96, SD = 11.51$) scored slightly lower than girls ($M = 116.60, SD = 8.82$). Gender differences were more pronounced for Life Skills.

Independent samples t-tests confirmed these differences as statistically significant. For Life Skills, assuming equal variances, $t(198) = -6.683, p < .001$, indicated that girls scored significantly higher than boys (mean difference = -13.74, 95% CI [-17.80, -9.69]). For Happiness, without assuming equal variances, $t(185.38) = -2.510, p = .013$, revealed a smaller but significant difference favoring girls (mean difference = -3.64, 95% CI [-6.50, -0.78]).

Paired samples t-test comparing Life Skills and Happiness within the same participants showed a significant difference, $t(199) = 12.749, p < .001$, with Life Skills ($M = 131.01, SD = 16.05$) being higher than Happiness ($M = 114.78, SD = 10.39$; mean difference = 16.23, 95% CI [13.72, 18.74]).

Null Hypothesis Testing:

The study tested three null hypotheses regarding Life Skills and Happiness among secondary school students. First, an independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in Life Skills between male and female students, $t(198) = -6.683, p < .001$, with girls scoring higher than boys ($M = 137.88$ vs. $M = 124.14$), leading to the rejection of H_0 . Second, for Happiness, an independent samples t-test (not assuming equal variances) showed a significant difference, $t(185.38) = -2.510, p = .013$, with girls scoring higher than boys ($M = 116.60$ vs. $M = 112.96$), resulting in the rejection of H_0 . Third, a paired samples t-test comparing Life Skills and Happiness within the same students indicated that Life Skills scores were significantly higher than Happiness scores, $t(199) = 12.749, p < .001$, leading to the rejection of H_0 . These results demonstrate significant gender differences in both Life Skills and Happiness, as well as higher levels of Life Skills relative to Happiness among secondary school students.

Interpretation:

The results indicate that gender significantly influences both Life Skills and Happiness, with girls outperforming boys in both domains. The larger effect for Life Skills suggests that skill acquisition may be more sensitive to gender-based socialization patterns, while Happiness is influenced by a wider range of factors, including emotional and environmental contexts. The higher overall Life Skills compared to Happiness scores suggests that while students may develop practical and social competencies, these do not directly translate into higher subjective

well-being, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to enhance emotional well-being alongside skill development.

Implications for Practice:

The findings suggest that schools should prioritize both Life Skills development and emotional well-being programs to foster holistic growth among students. Gender-sensitive approaches may be particularly beneficial, ensuring that boys receive additional support to enhance Life Skills and Happiness. Integrating structured activities that promote social, emotional, and coping skills alongside initiatives aimed at improving subjective well-being can help bridge the gap between competence and Happiness. Such interventions can contribute to more balanced, resilient, and adaptive students, better prepared for academic and social challenges.

CONCLUSION:

The study rejects the null hypotheses, demonstrating significant gender differences in Life Skills and Happiness and confirming that Life Skills scores are higher than Happiness scores among secondary school students. These findings underscore the importance of integrating both Life Skills education and well-being programs in schools, with attention to gender-specific strategies to foster holistic development

Educational and Policy Implications:

The findings of this study have important implications for both educational practice and policy formulation. Schools should integrate structured Life Skills and well-being programs into the curriculum to foster holistic development in students. Gender-sensitive strategies can help address the observed differences, ensuring that boys receive targeted support to enhance Life Skills and subjective well-being. Educational policies should encourage training for teachers in social-emotional learning, coping strategies, and student-centered interventions that promote both competence and Happiness. At a broader level, policymakers can support the development of inclusive programs that balance academic rigor with mental health and life skills education, contributing to resilient and adaptive adolescents prepared for future personal and professional challenges

Limitations and Future Directions:

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample was limited to secondary school students from a specific region, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Second, the cross-sectional design restricts causal inferences between Life Skills and Happiness. Third, self-report measures were used, which may be influenced by social desirability or response bias.

Future research could address these limitations by including a more diverse, representative sample across different regions and school types. Longitudinal studies could provide a better understanding of the developmental trajectory of Life Skills and Happiness over time. Additionally, mixed-method approaches, incorporating qualitative interviews or observational data, could offer deeper insights into the contextual and psychosocial factors influencing Life Skills and well-being. Finally, intervention-based studies could evaluate the effectiveness of gender-sensitive Life Skills and Happiness programs to inform evidence-based educational practices and policies

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