

## Role of Core Life Skills in Mitigating Academic Stress Among Students with Learning Disabilities

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### Abstract

*The increasing prevalence of academic stress among students with learning disabilities necessitates effective interventions to enhance their well-being and academic performance. This study investigates the role of core life skills in mitigating academic stress among these students using a convergent parallel design of mixed-methods approach. Quantitative assessments revealed significant negative correlations between academic stress and key life skills such as emotional regulation, self-awareness, problem-solving, and effective communication. Qualitative insights from students, teachers, and parents highlighted themes of increased confidence, better stress management, enhanced social skills, positive behavioral changes, improved academic performance, greater independence, and emotional stability. The study underscores the importance of integrating life skills training into educational programs for students with learning disabilities. Recommendations include developing practical life skills activities, comprehensive teacher training, engaging families in the training process, and continuous evaluation and refinement of the program. These insights provide valuable guidance for educators and policymakers to reduce academic stress and improve overall educational experiences.*

**Keywords:** *Academic Stress, Educational Programs, Emotional Regulation, Learning Disabilities, Life Skills Training.*

### Introduction

Academic stress refers to the stress that students experience due to the pressures, demands, and challenges of their academic pursuits (Najar, Nadaf, & Nazir, 2023). Academic stress is a significant concern for students across all educational levels, and its impact is particularly pronounced among students with learning disabilities. Learning disabilities such as dyslexia, ADHD, dyscalculia etc. create additional barriers for students, as they struggle with processing information, managing time, and performing tasks that their peers may find routine (Hansen & Boon, 2020). These barriers can exacerbate academic stress, often leading to feelings of frustration, anxiety, and lowered self-esteem. Left unmanaged, the cumulative effect of stress on students with learning disabilities can hinder academic performance (Nelson & Harwood, 2011) and overall well-being (Gignac & Parker, 2017).

In this context, core life skills have emerged as a promising solution to mitigate academic stress, particularly for students with learning disabilities. Life skills are defined as a set of abilities that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (WHO, 1997). While various interventions have been implemented to support these students, there is growing recognition of the importance of core life skills in mitigating academic stress. Core life skills such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and effective communication are crucial for helping students navigate their academic and personal challenges.

Research indicates that students with strong life skills are better equipped to handle stress and perform well academically. For students with learning disabilities, these skills can provide essential coping mechanisms that help them manage their unique educational hurdles (Durlak et al., 2011). Life skills training can empower these students by enhancing their ability to understand and manage their emotions, set realistic goals, and seek help when needed. By integrating life skills into educational programs, schools can create more supportive environments that address the holistic needs of students with learning disabilities.

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Despite the acknowledged benefits of life skills training, there is a gap in research specifically focusing on its impact on academic stress among students with learning disabilities. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the role of core life skills in mitigating academic stress within this population (Mansoor et al., 2020). By exploring the relationship between life skills and stress levels, the research seeks to provide insights into effective interventions that can improve the educational experiences and outcomes for students with learning disabilities.

#### *Significance of the Study*

The significance of this study lies in its potential to enhance educational practices and policies for students with learning disabilities. By identifying the specific life skills that are most effective in reducing academic stress; educators and policymakers can develop targeted interventions that support these students more effectively. This research can inform the design of life skills training programs that are integrated into the curriculum, thereby promoting a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

Furthermore, understanding the impact of life skills on academic stress can help educators better support the mental health and well-being of students with learning disabilities. As these students often face heightened levels of stress and anxiety, providing them with the tools to manage these challenges is essential for their academic success and overall development. The growing body of research underscores the need for educational interventions that emphasize life skills training for students with learning disabilities. Such programs not only equip students with tools to manage stress but also foster resilience and independence. Educational policymakers are increasingly recognizing the value of integrating life skills education into school curricula to support students with learning disabilities, ensuring they have the resources to thrive academically and emotionally (Kavale & Forness, 2020).

The findings of this study can contribute to a broader understanding of how to foster resilience and emotional well-being in students with learning disabilities, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes and quality of life.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Students with learning disabilities frequently experience higher levels of academic stress compared to their peers without disabilities. This stress can stem from various sources, including difficulties in understanding and completing assignments, fear of failure, and negative self-perceptions (Nelson & Harwood, 2011). While traditional academic interventions focus on improving specific learning skills, there is limited research on the role of core life skills in mitigating this stress. The problem addressed by this study is the lack of comprehensive understanding of how life skills training can reduce academic stress among students with learning disabilities, which is essential for developing effective support strategies that cater to their unique needs.

### **Objectives of the Study**

#### *i. To Assess the Initial Levels of Academic Stress and Core Life Skills among Students with Learning Disabilities*

This objective aims to establish baseline measurements of academic stress and core life skills using validated scales such as the Academic Stress Scale (ASS) and the Life Skills Assessment Scale (LSAS) before any intervention is applied. This will provide a clear understanding of the starting point for each participant in terms of their stress levels and proficiency in life skills.

#### *ii. To Implement a Comprehensive Life Skills Training Program for Students with Learning Disabilities*

This objective focuses on designing and delivering a 12-week life skills training program that addresses key areas such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and effective communication. The program aims to equip students with practical tools and strategies to manage their academic stress.

#### *iii. To Evaluate the Effectiveness of Life Skills Training in Reducing Academic Stress among Students with Learning Disabilities*

By comparing pre-test and post-test scores on the ASS and LSAS, this objective seeks to measure the impact of the life skills training program on students' levels of academic stress. Statistical analyses such as paired t-tests will be used to determine the significance of any changes observed.

#### *iv. To Explore the Relationship between Core Life Skills and Academic Stress Levels among Students with Learning Disabilities*

This objective involves conducting correlation and regression analyses to investigate how different life skills are related to academic stress levels. Understanding these relationships can help identify which specific skills are most effective in mitigating stress.

#### *v. To Gather Qualitative Insights from Students, Teachers, and Parents about the Impact of Life Skills Training*

Through semi-structured interviews and focus groups, this objective aims to collect qualitative data that provides deeper insights into the experiences and perceptions of students, teachers, and parents regarding the life skills training program. Thematic analysis will be used to identify common themes and patterns in the qualitative data.

*vi. To Develop Recommendations for Integrating Life Skills Training into Educational Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities*

Based on the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data, this objective aims to formulate practical recommendations for educators, school administrators, and policymakers on how to effectively integrate life skills training into the curriculum to support students with learning disabilities.

## Methodology

### *Research Design*

This study will employ a mixed-methods research design. In mixed method the investigator has employed a convergent parallel design data collection, analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data occur simultaneously and are analysed separately to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of core life skills in mitigating academic stress among students with learning disabilities. The quantitative component consists of a pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental design, while the qualitative component includes in-depth interviews and focus groups.

### *Participants*

The study involved students with learning disabilities from middle and high schools of District Srinagar (J&K). Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure they meet the criteria of having a diagnosed learning disability and experiencing academic stress. Parental consent and student assent was obtained prior to participation.

### *Instruments Used in the Study*

#### *Quantitative Measures*

*Academic Stress Scale (ASS):* This standardized Academic Stress scale constructed by Kohn & Frazer, was used to measure the levels of academic stress among students.

*Life Skills Assessment Scale (LSAS):* This standardized Academic Stress scale constructed by Talreja, Kennedy & Pearson was used to measure the various core life skills such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and communication.

#### *Qualitative Measures*

*Semi-Structured Interviews:* Interviews with students, teachers, and parents was conducted to explore perceptions and experiences related to life skills and academic stress.

*Focus Groups:* Focus groups were conducted with teachers and school counsellors to gain insights into the effectiveness of life skills training programs.

### *Procedure*

- *Pre-Test:* The ASS and LSAS was administered to all participants to establish baseline levels of academic stress and life skills.
- *Intervention:* Participants undergone a life skills training program designed to enhance core life skills. The program run for 12 weeks and the sessions conducted twice a week.
- *Post-Test:* After the intervention, the ASS and LSAS was re-administered to measure changes in academic stress and life skills.
- *Qualitative Data Collection:* Interviews and focus groups was conducted concurrently with the intervention and after its completion.

### *Data Analysis*

- *Quantitative Data:* Pre-test and post-test scores was analysed using paired t-tests to determine the effectiveness of the life skills training program. Correlation and regression analyses was also conducted to explore the relationships between life skills and academic stress.
- *Qualitative Data:* Interview and focus group transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and insights related to the impact of life skills on academic stress.

### *Scope of the Research*

The scope of this research is to explore the effectiveness of core life skills in reducing academic stress among students with learning disabilities. This study is significant in several ways:

- *Educational Implications:* The findings can inform educators and school administrators about the benefits of incorporating life skills training into the curriculum. By understanding which life skills

are most effective in reducing stress, schools can tailor their programs to better support students with learning disabilities.

- *Policy Development:* The research can contribute to policy-making at the school and district levels. Evidence from this study can be used to advocate for mandatory life skills education in schools, highlighting its importance in fostering not only academic success but also overall well-being among students with learning disabilities.
- *Future Research:* This study lays the groundwork for future research on the intersection of life skills and academic stress. It provides a model for subsequent studies to investigate other populations, age groups, or educational settings, thereby broadening the understanding of how life skills can mitigate stress in diverse contexts.
- *Holistic Development:* Beyond academic outcomes, this research emphasizes the importance of holistic student development. By focusing on life skills, the study promotes the idea that education should address emotional, social, and psychological aspects of student growth, particularly for those with learning disabilities.

### *Analysis and Interpretation*

*Objective 1: To Assess the Initial Levels of Academic Stress and Core Life Skills among Students with Learning Disabilities*

#### *Methodology*

To achieve the stated objectives, data was collected from students with learning disabilities using two validated instruments: the Academic Stress Scale (ASS) and the Life Skills Assessment Scale (LSAS). The participants were 100 students from middle and high schools who were diagnosed with learning disabilities. Baseline data was collected prior to any intervention to establish initial levels of academic stress and core life skills.

#### *Quantitative Data Analysis and Interpretation*

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of Academic Stress and Core Life Skills

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Academic Stress (ASS)</b>	72.45	12.30
<b>Self-awareness (LSAS)</b>	3.8	0.75
<b>Emotional Regulation (LSAS)</b>	3.5	0.80
<b>Problem-solving (LSAS)</b>	3.9	0.70
<b>Effective Communication (LSAS)</b>	3.6	0.85

The data reveals that students with learning disabilities experience moderate to high levels of academic stress, with a mean score of 72.45 on the ASS. The scores for core life skills, as measured by the LSAS, indicate a moderate proficiency across all skills. Self-awareness had a mean score of 3.8, emotional regulation scored 3.5, problem-solving scored 3.9, and effective communication scored 3.6.

#### *Qualitative Data Analysis*

The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with students, teachers, and parents. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes related to academic stress and life skills. The following themes emerged:

*Theme 1: Coping Mechanisms* Students and parents frequently mentioned coping mechanisms that students use to manage stress. These include talking to friends or family members, engaging in hobbies, and physical activities such as sports.

*Theme 2: Perceived Support* Many students highlighted the importance of support from teachers and peers. Positive interactions and encouragement from teachers were cited as significant factors in helping them manage academic stress.

*Theme 3: Self-Efficacy* Students' belief in their ability to succeed academically was a recurrent theme. Those with higher self-efficacy reported lower levels of stress, indicating a potential link between self-efficacy and academic stress levels.

*Theme 4: Emotional Regulation Challenges* Students with learning disabilities reported difficulties in managing their emotions, which often exacerbated their stress levels. This highlights the need for targeted interventions to improve emotional regulation skills.

#### *Discussion of Themes*

The themes generated from the qualitative data collected from the stake holders were discussed to provide insights into the objective 1.

### *Coping Mechanisms*

The qualitative data reveals that students with learning disabilities employ various coping mechanisms to handle academic stress. Engaging in physical activities, pursuing hobbies, and seeking social support were commonly mentioned. These coping strategies are essential for stress management and can be enhanced through life skills training.

### *Perceived Support*

Majority of the participants revealed that support from teachers and peers plays a crucial role in mitigating academic stress. Students who feel supported by their teachers and peers tend to experience lower stress levels. This underscores the importance of creating a supportive educational environment where students with learning disabilities feel valued and understood.

### *Self-Efficacy*

The theme of self-efficacy emerged as a significant factor influencing academic stress. Students who believe in their academic abilities tend to experience less stress. This finding aligns with Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, which posits that individuals with higher self-efficacy are better equipped to handle challenges and stress.

### *Emotional Regulation Challenges*

The studies participants revealed that students with learning disabilities often face challenges in regulating their emotions, leading to increased stress. This finding highlights the need for interventions that focus on improving emotional regulation skills. Teaching students how to manage their emotions can significantly reduce their academic stress.

### *Objective 2: To Implement a Comprehensive Life Skills Training Program for Students with Learning Disabilities*

#### *Methodology for Implementation*

To achieve this objective, a comprehensive life skills training program was designed and implemented over 12 weeks. The program focused on enhancing self-awareness, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and effective communication among students with learning disabilities. Sessions were conducted twice a week and were facilitated by trained educators and counsellors.

#### *Program Content*

- *Self-Awareness:* Activities included journaling, self-reflection exercises, and group discussions aimed at helping students recognize their strengths and areas for improvement.
- *Emotional Regulation:* Techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness, and guided imagery were taught to help students manage their emotions effectively.
- *Problem-Solving:* Students engaged in role-playing scenarios and collaborative tasks designed to enhance their problem-solving skills.
- *Effective Communication:* Workshops focused on active listening, assertiveness training, and non-verbal communication skills.

### *Quantitative Data Analysis and Interpretation*

**Table 2.** Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores for Life Skills

Life Skill	Pre-Test Mean	SD	Post-Test Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
<b>Self-Awareness</b>	3.8	0.75	4.5	0.60	-8.62	<0.001
<b>Emotional Regulation</b>	3.5	0.80	4.3	0.70	-7.89	<0.001
<b>Problem-Solving</b>	3.9	0.70	4.6	0.65	-7.55	<0.001
<b>Effective Communication</b>	3.6	0.85	4.4	0.72	-7.29	<0.001

The pre-test and post-test scores indicate significant improvements across all life skills areas after the implementation of the training program. The mean scores for self-awareness, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and effective communication all showed notable increases, with p-values less than 0.001, indicating the effectiveness of the training program.

### *Qualitative Data Analysis*

The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups conducted with students, teachers, and parents. Thematic analysis identified several themes related to the impact of the life skills training program.

*Theme 1: Increased Self-Esteem* Students reported feeling more confident in their abilities and a greater sense of self-worth. This increased self-esteem was attributed to the self-awareness activities and positive reinforcement provided during the program.

*Theme 2: Enhanced Emotional Regulation* Participants noted a significant improvement in their ability to manage emotions. Techniques such as deep breathing and mindfulness were frequently mentioned as helpful tools for reducing anxiety and stress.

*Theme 3: Improved Problem-Solving Skills* Teachers and parents observed that students were better able to approach and resolve academic and personal challenges. The role-playing and collaborative tasks were highlighted as particularly effective in developing these skills.

*Theme 4: Better Communication* Students, teachers, and parents reported noticeable improvements in communication. Students were more likely to express their thoughts and feelings clearly and listen actively to others.

#### *Discussion of Themes*

The themes generated from the qualitative data collected from the stake holders were discussed to provide insights into the objective 2.

#### *Increased Self-Esteem*

It was observed that the life skills training program significantly boosted students' self-esteem. Activities that promoted self-reflection and positive self-acknowledgment played a crucial role in this improvement. As self-esteem is closely linked to academic performance and overall well-being, this finding underscores the importance of integrating self-awareness activities into educational programs for students with learning disabilities.

#### *Enhanced Emotional Regulation*

A significant portion of participants revealed that the ability to regulate emotions effectively is essential for managing academic stress. They also revealed that the training program's focus on mindfulness and deep breathing techniques provided students with practical tools to control their anxiety and stress levels. This improvement in emotional regulation is crucial for students with learning disabilities, who often struggle with heightened emotional responses.

#### *Improved Problem-Solving Skills*

The problem-solving component of the program was particularly effective. Engaging in role-playing and collaborative tasks helped students develop practical strategies for addressing challenges. This skill is vital for academic success and everyday functioning, highlighting the importance of teaching problem-solving in schools.

#### *Better Communication*

Effective communication is a critical life skill that impacts all areas of a student's life. The program's focus on active listening and assertiveness training resulted in improved communication skills among participants. This enhancement not only helps in reducing academic stress but also improves social interactions and relationships.

*Objective 3: To Evaluate the Effectiveness of Life Skills Training in Reducing Academic Stress among Students with Learning Disabilities*

#### *Methodology for Evaluation*

To evaluate the effectiveness of the life skills training program, pre-test and post-test scores on the Academic Stress Scale (ASS) were compared. The participants included 100 students with learning disabilities who completed the life skills training program. Data were analyzed using paired t-tests to determine the significance of changes in academic stress levels before and after the intervention.

#### *Quantitative Data Analysis and Interpretation*

**Table 3.** Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores for Academic Stress

Measure	Pre-Test Mean	SD	Post-Test Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
<b>Academic Stress (ASS)</b>	72.45	12.30	55.30	10.25	10.56	<0.001

The data shows a significant reduction in academic stress levels after the life skills training program. The mean academic stress score decreased from 72.45 (SD = 12.30) to 55.30 (SD = 10.25), with a t-value of 10.56 and a p-value less than 0.001, indicating that the reduction in stress levels is statistically significant.

#### *Qualitative Data Analysis*

The qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with students, teachers, and parents. Thematic analysis identified several themes related to the reduction in academic stress following the life skills training program.

*Theme 1: Improved Coping Strategies* Students reported developing better coping mechanisms for handling academic pressure, such as time management techniques and relaxation methods learned during the training.

*Theme 2: Increased Self-Efficacy* The training program boosted students' confidence in their ability to tackle academic challenges, which contributed to lower stress levels.

*Theme 3: Enhanced Emotional Support* Students felt more supported emotionally by their peers and teachers, who participated in the life skills training, creating a more nurturing learning environment.

*Theme 4: Reduction in Anxiety and Worry* Participants noted a decrease in anxiety and worry related to schoolwork, attributing this change to improved emotional regulation skills and better problem-solving strategies.

#### *Discussion of Themes*

The themes generated from the qualitative data collected from the stake holders were discussed to provide insights into the objective 3.

#### *Improved Coping Strategies*

The life skills training program effectively equipped students with practical coping strategies for managing academic stress. Time management and relaxation techniques were particularly beneficial. Students reported feeling more in control of their workload and better able to manage deadlines and assignments, resulting in reduced stress levels. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that effective coping strategies can mitigate academic stress (Friedlander et al., 2007).

#### *Increased Self-Efficacy*

The program significantly boosted students' self-efficacy, or their belief in their ability to succeed in academic tasks. Enhanced self-efficacy was linked to lower stress levels, as students felt more capable of handling academic challenges. This is consistent with Bandura's (1997) theory that higher self-efficacy is associated with better stress management.

#### *Enhanced Emotional Support*

The qualitative data highlighted the importance of emotional support from peers and teachers. The life skills training program fostered a supportive environment where students felt understood and encouraged. This emotional support was crucial in reducing stress levels, as it provided students with a sense of security and belonging (Wentzel, 1998).

#### *Reduction in Anxiety and Worry*

The program's focus on emotional regulation and problem-solving significantly reduced students' anxiety and worry related to academic tasks. Techniques such as deep breathing and mindfulness helped students manage their emotions better, leading to lower stress levels. This finding supports the notion that emotional regulation skills are vital for stress reduction (Gross, 2013).

*Objective 4: To Explore the Relationship between Core Life Skills and Academic Stress Levels among Students with Learning Disabilities*

## **Methodology**

To explore the relationship between core life skills and academic stress levels, a correlational study design was employed. The study involved 100 students with learning disabilities who had completed the life skills training program. The data was collected using the Academic Stress Scale (ASS) and the Life Skills Assessment Scale (LSAS). Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between the various life skills and academic stress levels.

#### *Quantitative Data Analysis and Interpretation*

**Table 4.** Correlation Matrix for Life Skills and Academic Stress

Variable	Self-Awareness	Emotional Regulation	Problem-Solving	Effective Communication
Academic Stress (ASS)	-0.56**	-0.62**	-0.58**	-0.55**
Self-Awareness (LSAS)		0.74**	0.69**	0.66**
Emotional Regulation (LSAS)			0.72**	0.70**

<b>Problem-Solving (LSAS)</b>				0.68**
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Note: \*\* $p < 0.01$

The correlation matrix shows significant negative correlations between academic stress and all four life skills. The strongest negative correlation was found between emotional regulation and academic stress ( $r = -0.62$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that students who are better at regulating their emotions tend to experience lower levels of academic stress. Similarly, significant negative correlations were observed between academic stress and self-awareness ( $r = -0.56$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), problem-solving ( $r = -0.58$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and effective communication ( $r = -0.55$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

#### *Qualitative Data Analysis*

The qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with students, teachers, and parents. Thematic analysis identified several themes related to the relationship between core life skills and academic stress.

*Theme 1: Emotional Resilience* Students who developed strong emotional regulation skills reported feeling more resilient and capable of handling stressors. They were better able to maintain composure in challenging situations and recover quickly from setbacks.

*Theme 2: Self-Understanding* Enhanced self-awareness helped students recognize their stress triggers and understand their reactions to academic pressures. This self-understanding enabled them to implement effective coping strategies and manage their stress levels more proactively.

*Theme 3: Strategic Problem-Solving* Students with improved problem-solving skills were more adept at breaking down complex tasks into manageable steps, which reduced feelings of overwhelm and stress. They were also more confident in their ability to find solutions to academic challenges.

*Theme 4: Effective Communication* The ability to communicate effectively helped students express their needs and seek support when necessary. This reduced feelings of isolation and increased their ability to manage stress through social support networks.

#### *Discussion of Themes*

The themes generated from the qualitative data collected from the stake holders were discussed to provide insights into the objective 4.

#### *Emotional Resilience*

The significant negative correlation between emotional regulation and academic stress underscores the importance of emotional resilience. Students who can manage their emotions effectively are less likely to experience high levels of academic stress. This finding aligns with research by Gross (2013), which highlights the critical role of emotional regulation in stress management.

#### *Self-understanding*

The negative correlation between self-awareness and academic stress indicates that students who understand their stress triggers can better manage their reactions. This self-awareness is crucial for implementing effective coping strategies and reducing stress. These findings support the work of Goleman (1995), who emphasized the importance of self-awareness in emotional intelligence.

#### *Strategic Problem-Solving*

Students with strong problem-solving skills are better equipped to handle academic challenges, which reduces stress levels. The ability to break down tasks and find solutions aligns with the cognitive-behavioural approach to stress management, which emphasizes problem-solving as a key strategy (Nezu et al., 2013).

#### *Effective Communication*

Effective communication skills are essential for managing academic stress. Students who can articulate their needs and seek support are less likely to feel isolated and overwhelmed. This finding is consistent with previous research highlighting the importance of social support in stress reduction (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

#### *Objective 5: To Gather Qualitative Insights from Students, Teachers, and Parents about the Impact of Life Skills Training Methodology*

To gather qualitative insights, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with students, teachers, and parents. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who had been actively involved in or affected by the life skills training program. The interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns.

#### *Analysis and Interpretation of Data*



The qualitative data revealed rich insights into the perceived impact of the life skills training program from multiple perspectives. Below is the table summarizing the themes identified from the qualitative data.

**Table 5.** Summary of Themes from Qualitative Data

Participant Group	Theme	Description
Students	Increased Confidence	Students felt more self-assured in their abilities and decision-making.
	Better Stress Management	Improved ability to handle academic pressures and manage stress.
	Enhanced Social Skills	Notable improvements in communication and interpersonal interactions.
Teachers	Positive Behavioural Changes	Observed reductions in disruptive behaviours and increased focus in class.
	Improved Academic Performance	Enhanced engagement and performance in academic tasks.
Parents	Greater Independence	Students displayed more autonomy and responsibility in their daily lives.
	Emotional Stability	Reduced emotional outbursts and better emotional control at home.

#### *Discussion of Themes*

The themes generated from the qualitative data collected from the stake holders were discussed to provide insights into the objective 5.

#### *Students*

##### *Increased Confidence*

Students reported feeling more confident after the life skills training program. This increase in self-assurance was attributed to the program's emphasis on self-awareness and positive reinforcement. As one student noted, "I now believe I can handle my schoolwork and other responsibilities better." This finding aligns with Bandura's (1997) concept of self-efficacy, which highlights the importance of belief in one's abilities for successful task completion.

##### *Better Stress Management*

Students also highlighted improvements in their ability to manage academic stress. Techniques such as mindfulness and problem-solving skills were particularly beneficial. One student shared, "I use deep breathing exercises before exams, and it really helps me stay calm." This supports the notion that life skills training can provide effective tools for stress reduction (Gross, 2013).

##### *Enhanced Social Skills*

Many students reported enhanced social skills, particularly in communication and interpersonal interactions. This was evident in their ability to articulate thoughts and feelings more clearly and engage in more positive social interactions. According to Goleman (1995), these skills are crucial components of emotional intelligence, which can significantly impact academic and social success.

#### *Teachers*

##### *Positive Behavioural Changes*

Teachers observed positive behavioural changes in students following the training program. These included reductions in disruptive behaviours and increased focus during class. One teacher remarked, "Students are more engaged and less likely to act out in class." These observations are consistent with research indicating that life skills training can improve classroom behaviour and academic engagement (Zins et al., 2004).

##### *Improved Academic Performance*

Teachers also noted improvements in academic performance, with students showing greater engagement and better performance on academic tasks. This suggests that the skills learned during the training program may have a direct impact on students' academic success. According to Durlak et al. (2011), social-emotional learning programs can enhance academic outcomes by improving students' social and emotional skills.

#### *Parents*

##### *Greater Independence*

Parents reported that their children displayed greater independence and responsibility in their daily lives. This was particularly evident in their ability to manage schoolwork and other responsibilities without constant supervision. One parent commented, "My child is now more responsible with homework and daily chores." This aligns with findings from previous studies that life skills training can promote independence and self-management skills in students (WHO, 1997).

#### *Emotional Stability*

Parents also observed increased emotional stability in their children, with fewer emotional outbursts and better emotional control at home. One parent noted, "There are fewer tantrums, and my child seems more composed." This supports the view that life skills training can improve emotional regulation and reduce emotional distress (Greenberg et al., 2003).

*Objective 6: To Develop Recommendations for Integrating Life Skills Training into Educational Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities*

#### *Methodology*

To develop recommendations for integrating life skills training into educational programs, a mixed-methods approach was utilized. This included a thorough review of existing literature on life skills training and education for students with learning disabilities, as well as insights from qualitative data collected from interviews and focus groups with students, teachers, and parents. Best practices and successful models of life skills integration were identified and analysed to create actionable recommendations.

#### *Analysis and Interpretation of Data*

**Table 6.** Summary of Data Sources for Recommendations

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>
<b>Literature Review</b>	Identified effective strategies and frameworks for life skills integration.
<b>Student Interviews</b>	Highlighted the need for practical, relevant life skills activities.
<b>Teacher Focus Groups</b>	Emphasized the importance of teacher training and ongoing support.
<b>Parent Interviews</b>	Suggested the inclusion of family involvement and communication strategies.
<b>Case Studies of Successful Programs</b>	Provided models of effective life skills training integration in various educational contexts.

#### *Discussion of Theme*

The themes generated from the qualitative data collected from the stake holders were discussed to provide insights into the objective 6.

#### *Theme 1: Relevance and Practicality of Life Skills Activities*

Students expressed a preference for life skills activities that are directly relevant to their everyday experiences and challenges. Practical exercises, such as role-playing scenarios and real-life problem-solving tasks, were particularly valued. Incorporating these activities into the curriculum can enhance engagement and effectiveness (Zins et al., 2004).

#### *Theme 2: Teacher Training and Support*

Teachers emphasized the need for comprehensive training and ongoing support to effectively deliver life skills training. Professional development programs should include strategies for teaching life skills, managing diverse classrooms, and integrating these skills into academic subjects. Continuous support through coaching and collaboration with peers can also enhance implementation (Durlak et al., 2011).

#### *Theme 3: Family Involvement*

Parents highlighted the importance of involving families in the life skills training process. Strategies such as parent workshops, regular communication, and resources for reinforcing skills at home can foster a supportive environment for students. Engaging families helps to reinforce the skills learned at school and ensures a consistent approach across different contexts (Greenberg et al., 2003).

#### *Theme 4: Model Programs and Best Practices*

Case studies of successful programs provided valuable insights into effective models of life skills training integration. Programs that demonstrated high levels of student engagement, measurable improvements in life skills, and positive academic and behavioural outcomes were analysed to identify key components of success. These components included a well-structured curriculum, active learning strategies, and a supportive school culture (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

#### *Recommendations and Suggestions*

- *Integrate Practical Life Skills Activities into the Curriculum*

It is suggested to develop a curriculum that includes practical, relevant life skills activities such as role-playing, problem-solving tasks, and real-life scenarios.

We should ensure that these activities are adaptable to the specific needs and challenges of students with learning disabilities.

- *Provide Comprehensive Teacher Training and Ongoing Support*

- It is suggested to implement professional development programs focused on life skills training for teachers.
- We should include training on effective teaching strategies, classroom management, and integration of life skills into academic subjects.
- It is suggested to establish a support system for teachers, including coaching, collaboration, and resources.

- *Engage Families in the Life Skills Training Process*

- It is suggested to conduct parent workshops and provide resources to help families reinforce life skills at home.
- We should maintain regular communication with parents about their child's progress and ways they can support learning outside of school.

- *Adopt and Adapt Successful Models of Life Skills Integration*

- It is suggested to Review and adapt successful programs and best practices for life skills training integration.
- We should customize these models to fit the unique needs and context of the school and student population.

- *Evaluate and Refine the Life Skills Program Continuously*

- It is suggested to implement a system for ongoing evaluation and refinement of the life skills training program.
- We should collect feedback from students, teachers, and parents to make necessary adjustments and improvements.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the crucial role that core life skills play in mitigating academic stress among students with learning disabilities. The quantitative data revealed significant negative correlations between academic stress and key life skills such as emotional regulation, self-awareness, problem-solving, and effective communication. These results indicate that students who possess stronger life skills experience lower levels of academic stress, highlighting the potential of life skills training as a valuable intervention.

Qualitative insights from students, teachers, and parents further supported these findings. Students reported increased confidence, better stress management, and enhanced social skills, which contributed to a reduction in academic stress. Teachers observed positive behavioural changes and improved academic performance, while parents noted greater independence and emotional stability in their children. These themes suggest that life skills training not only helps in managing academic stress but also promotes overall personal and academic development.

Integrating life skills training into educational programs for students with learning disabilities offers a promising approach to addressing academic stress. This study recommends the development of practical, relevant life skills activities, comprehensive teacher training, and active family involvement in the training process. Additionally, adopting and adapting successful models of life skills integration and continuously evaluating the program can ensure its effectiveness and sustainability.

In conclusion, enhancing life skills among students with learning disabilities is essential for their academic success and well-being. Educators, policymakers, and stakeholders should prioritize the inclusion of life skills training in educational curricula to create supportive learning environments that address the unique needs of these students. By doing so, we can help mitigate academic stress and enable students with learning disabilities to thrive both academically and personally.

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