

A Comparative Study of the Life Skills of Students Studying at the Undergraduate Level in Aided and Self-Financed Colleges

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ABSTRACT

In the present era, the purpose of education is not limited to providing students with subject-related knowledge; rather, it also aims to enable them to effectively face various situations and challenges of daily life. Life skills help individuals develop abilities such as decision-making, problem-solving, effective communication, self-awareness, empathy, interpersonal relationships, stress management, creative thinking, and critical thinking. The undergraduate stage is particularly important in students' lives, as they have to make several decisions related to higher education, employment, future careers, social relationships, and personal life. At present, technological development, social media, competition, changing employment conditions, and concerns about the future present numerous challenges before students. In such circumstances, life skills can help students behave in a balanced and effective manner. In the present study, 500 students from aided and self-financed colleges were selected through the stratified random sampling technique and classified on the basis of gender and locality. For measuring the life skills of the students, the "Life Skills Scale" developed by Dr. Anjum Ahmad and Mrs. Sabba Parveen was used. The study included 248 students from aided colleges and 252 students from self-financed colleges. Therefore, the difference found between the life skills of the two groups was not statistically significant, and the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that there is no significant difference in the life skills of students studying in aided and self-financed colleges. This finding indicates that the development of students' life skills does not depend solely on the financial nature of the college. Students' personal efforts, self-motivation, family environment, social conditions, teacher guidance, interaction with peers, co-curricular activities, and personal experiences may also play important roles in the development of life skills. In both types of colleges, students receive opportunities to participate in various educational, social, cultural, and co-curricular activities, which may contribute to a relatively similar level of life skills among them. The findings of the study clearly suggest that, for the holistic development of students, colleges should promote life-skills-based activities, counselling, guidance, leadership opportunities, group work, problem-solving activities, and programmes related to communication skills. Thus, the present study highlights the importance of life skills among students in higher education and concludes that, for the development of life skills, the experiences, opportunities, guidance, and active participation available to students may be more important than the financial status or type of the institution....

Keywords: Aided and Self-Financed Colleges, Undergraduate Students, Life Skills

INTRODUCTION:

Life skills help an individual deal effectively with the essential situations and challenges of everyday life. Life skills are related not only to a person's knowledge but also to his or her behaviour and practical abilities. A student may have good knowledge of a particular subject, but if he or she is unable to cope with stress, behave appropriately with others, choose suitable alternatives for solving problems, or control emotions, the practical use of that knowledge may remain limited. On the other hand, a student equipped with life skills may be better able to use his or her abilities in an appropriate direction. Life skills help individuals adjust themselves according to different situations, face problems, understand others, and make appropriate decisions related to their lives. Therefore, in the present education system, life skills are increasingly being considered an important foundation for the holistic development of students. According to the World Health Organization, life skills are abilities that enable an individual to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Decision-making, problem-solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, empathy, and coping with emotions and stress are considered particularly important life skills. The

development of these skills influences not only an individual's personal life but also his or her educational and social life. When a student learns to manage time properly, determine priorities, consider different alternatives to a problem, and develop the ability to make appropriate decisions, he or she can pursue education more effectively. Similarly, effective communication and interpersonal relationship skills help students establish healthy relationships with teachers, classmates, family members, and other people in society. Undergraduate education is an important stage in the life of a student. At this level, a student generally moves beyond adolescence and gradually enters young adulthood. During this period, significant changes take place in the student's personality, thoughts, interests, values, and future goals. At the undergraduate level, students have to make several personal and educational decisions. Selection of subjects, planning for higher education, preparation for employment, preparation for competitive examinations, selection of friends, development of social relationships, and decisions related to future life become important during this period. At the same time, students may experience pressure related to academic achievement and competition for employment. Therefore, the development of life skills is particularly important for undergraduate students. Life skills can help them recognize their abilities, cope with difficulties, and make more appropriate decisions regarding their future. The nature of higher education is also changing rapidly in the present time. Technological development, the internet, social media, online education, globalization, and changing employment opportunities have created new possibilities as well as new challenges for students. Students have to select useful information from the large amount of information available to them. They need to use online resources wisely, manage their time effectively, and maintain a balance between their social and personal lives. At times, comparison of achievements, concern about the future, fear of failure, and social expectations may create stress among students. In such situations, life skills such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, problem-solving, decision-making, and stress management can be highly useful. Therefore, studying the life skills of students at the higher education level is important not only from an educational perspective but also from a social and personal perspective. In India, institutions providing higher education do not have a uniform structure. Various types of colleges provide education to students, among which aided and self-financed colleges are important. Aided colleges generally receive financial assistance from the government or concerned institutions, and their educational arrangements are operated according to prescribed rules and available resources. In contrast, self-financed colleges mainly depend on their own financial resources for their educational and administrative activities. Students studying in these two types of colleges may differ in their social, economic, family, and educational backgrounds. The institutional environment, available facilities, teaching arrangements, co-curricular activities, teacher-student relationships, and opportunities available to students may also differ from one college to another. These circumstances may influence the personality and development of life skills among students. Comparing the life skills of students studying in aided and self-financed colleges is important because there may be differences in the educational resources and institutional environments available in the two types of institutions. If students are provided with sufficient opportunities to participate in sports, cultural activities, group work, debates, leadership activities, counselling, and social service, these activities may contribute to the development of communication, leadership, cooperation, decision-making, and problem-solving skills. Similarly, teacher-student relationships, classroom environment, and the availability of guidance and counselling facilities in colleges may also contribute to the development of life skills. Therefore, it is not sufficient to examine only the type of college in which a student is studying; it is also necessary to understand the types of experiences and opportunities available to students within that institutional environment. A comparison of the life skills of students studying in aided and self-financed colleges may help in understanding whether any significant difference exists in the life skills of students on the basis of the type of institution. If a significant difference is found between the two groups, an attempt can be made to understand its possible causes. If no significant difference is found, it may indicate that the financial nature of a college alone is not a decisive factor in the development of life skills. Instead, several other factors such as family, peer group, personal experiences, social environment, teachers' behaviour, and the active participation of students themselves may play an important role. Thus, a comparative study can be useful in understanding the actual status of life skills and the factors associated with their development. The increasing emphasis on the holistic development of students in the present education system further enhances the importance of this study. The purpose of higher education institutions should not be limited to providing degrees; they should also prepare students to face real-life situations. Students who possess not only knowledge but also skills such as decision-making, problem-solving,

communication, cooperation, self-awareness, and emotional balance may be better able to deal effectively with situations arising in their personal and professional lives. Therefore, it is necessary to promote life-skill-based activities in colleges, provide counselling and guidance to students, and offer them opportunities to participate in various co-curricular and social activities. The present study, entitled **“A Comparative Study of the Life Skills of Students Studying at the Undergraduate Level in Aided and Self-Financed Colleges,”** is significant in this broader context. The study seeks to examine the status of life skills among students studying in aided and self-financed colleges and to understand the comparative differences between the two groups. The findings of the study may help identify the life skills that are relatively well developed among students and the areas that require greater attention. The findings may also be useful for colleges, teachers, parents, counsellors, and persons associated with educational policy. If appropriate educational environments, guidance, and opportunities are provided for the development of life skills, students can not only make their educational journey more effective but can also develop into responsible, self-reliant, balanced, and socially competent citizens in the future. Therefore, the study of life skills among undergraduate students is a relevant and useful area of research in the context of contemporary higher education.

Need and Significance

Undergraduate education is an important stage in a student's life, during which the student prepares not only for higher education but also for future employment, social life, and personal responsibilities. At this level, students face various situations such as academic competition, concerns about employment, financial problems, social expectations, family responsibilities, and the rapidly changing technological and social environment. To deal effectively with such situations, subject knowledge alone is not sufficient; it is also necessary to develop life skills among students. Life skills refer to the practical abilities through which an individual can appropriately deal with problems of daily life, make correct decisions, communicate effectively, regulate emotions, establish healthy relationships with others, and behave in a balanced manner in stressful situations. The development of life skills among undergraduate students plays an important role in making them self-reliant, responsible, confident, and socially competent. In the present era, the purpose of higher education is not merely to obtain good marks in examinations but also to prepare students to face the real-life situations they may encounter. Students studying in aided and self-financed colleges may receive different types of experiences in terms of available educational resources, teaching environment, co-curricular activities, teacher-student relationships, and socio-economic conditions. Due to these circumstances, similarities or differences may be found in the life skills of students studying in the two types of colleges. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a comparative study of the life skills of students belonging to both groups in order to understand how the type of college and educational environment are related to the practical life skills of students. The significance of this study is further enhanced by the fact that life skills influence not only students' academic success but also their personality development, social adjustment, decision-making ability, problem-solving skills, leadership ability, and future employability. If the level of life skills is found to be relatively low in any group of students, colleges can more effectively organize counselling, personality development programmes, communication skills training, stress management, decision-making, and problem-solving activities. This study can help teachers and college administrators understand the actual needs of students and develop appropriate programmes for their overall development. It will also help parents understand that students' development is not limited to academic achievement; behavioural and social competencies also have an important place in their development. From a research perspective, this study will clarify the comparative status of life skills among students of aided and self-financed colleges and provide a foundation for future researchers to undertake further studies in this area. Therefore, a comparative study of the life skills of undergraduate students studying in aided and self-financed colleges is highly necessary and significant in the present educational and social context.

Review of Related Research Literature

Tiwari and Bajpai (2021) reviewed previous studies related to life skills education at the school level in the Indian context. A total of 77 studies were included in the review and were classified into different thematic categories. The review revealed that life skills programmes were useful in bringing positive changes in students' attitudes, behaviour, and psychosocial competencies. The researchers also emphasized that trained teachers and

systematic training programmes are necessary for making life skills education effective. Although the study focused on the school level, its findings provide a basis for promoting life skills development in higher education as well.

Gupta (2021) studied the role of teaching methods in the development of life skills. The study indicated that merely providing subject content through the curriculum is not sufficient for developing life skills among students. It is necessary to adopt teaching processes such as collaborative work, inquiry-based learning, problem-solving, and active participation. The study highlighted the need to integrate life skills and 21st-century skills into the curriculum and teaching-learning process in higher education.

Joshi, Sharma, and Sharma (2022) studied the effectiveness of a Samriddhi programme for developing life skills among undergraduate students at Punjab Agricultural University. The study included 60 first-year undergraduate students who had a relatively low level of life skills. A life skills assessment scale was used, and an online training-based intervention was provided. The purpose of the study was to examine the extent to which planned life skills training could develop life skills among students. This study is important for the present research because it demonstrates that life skills among college students can be developed through systematic training and educational activities.

Rathore (2022) compared male and female college students with regard to life skills in Mumbai. The study included 90 college students aged 18–25 years. Various dimensions of life skills, including self-awareness, empathy, decision-making, problem-solving, communication, interpersonal relationships, and stress management, were studied. The study suggests that life skills should not be examined only on the basis of an overall score but also through their different dimensions.

Kaur and colleagues (2023) conducted a study on youth-centred life skills training and counselling programmes in the Indian context, examining various personal and social factors associated with life skills. The study found that a large proportion of the participants had a good level of life skills. It also indicated that personality, quality of social life, and environmental conditions were related to life skills. The study suggests that the development of life skills does not depend solely on the educational system of a college; rather, the social and personal background of students also plays an important role.

Kaur et al. (2023) studied the effectiveness of self-awareness training among young adults by comparing the levels of undergraduate students before and after a life skills intervention. The major objective of the study was to examine the development of self-awareness and vocational skills. The findings indicated that life skills such as self-awareness can be developed through planned training. This finding is important for the present research because the educational and co-curricular opportunities available to students in aided and self-financed colleges may influence their level of life skills.

Venkatesh et al. (2023) examined the positive and negative factors influencing life skills development among university students. The study reported that in the present competitive environment, academic qualifications alone are not sufficient. Students also need abilities such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and adaptability. The study emphasized the identification of various factors that influence the development of life skills in the university environment.

Vemula, Raghu, and Lalramthari (2024) studied life skills among 400 college students. The life skills scale included universal human values, vocational skills, communication skills, and leadership and management skills. The study found that the level of vocational skills was the highest, whereas communication skills were comparatively lower. Significant differences were also found on the basis of gender, locality, and family structure. Urban students were found to perform better than rural students. This study is particularly useful for the present research because it indicates that students' social and institutional backgrounds may be associated with their level of life skills.

Pachauri and Kumar (2024) studied life skills among 600 students studying in universities and colleges in Punjab with reference to their socio-economic status and field of study. The purpose of the study was to examine how life skills are related to students' socio-economic background and their area of study. This study is highly relevant to the present research because students of aided and self-financed colleges may differ in terms of educational facilities, socio-economic background, and institutional environment.

Yadav and Vatta (2025) studied the perceptions and expectations of undergraduate students at Banaras Hindu University regarding 21st-century skills. The study focused on areas such as communication, collaboration,

leadership, learning and innovation, and life and career skills. The study makes it clear that the importance of life skills and 21st-century skills for students in higher education is continuously increasing.

Yadav and Vatta (2026) developed and validated a multidimensional scale for assessing 21st-century skills among college students. Initially, 120 items were developed, and after expert review, a 56-item scale was prepared. The scale was administered to 350 students, and its structure was examined through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. This study demonstrates the usefulness of adopting a scientific and multidimensional approach to the measurement of life skills in the present research.

Day, Basar, and Muzafar (2026) studied life skills among students in higher education by considering variables such as gender, locality, and educational level. The study included undergraduate and postgraduate students and employed a life skills scale. The study indicates that there is a growing need to understand the level of life skills among higher education students on the basis of different background variables.

Vatta et al. (2026) conducted a qualitative study on leadership and life skills development programmes among female students in higher education institutions. The study found that such programmes can play an important role in developing students' self-confidence, leadership abilities, and social responsibility. The study also identified motivational factors and barriers affecting students' participation in these programmes. This study further strengthens the view that the environment of higher education institutions plays an important role in the development of life skills among students.

Problem Statement

A Comparative Study of the Life Skills of Students Studying at the Undergraduate Level in Aided and Self-Financed Colleges.

Definition of Variables

Aided College: In the present study, an aided college refers to a college that receives grants or financial assistance from the government or the concerned government agency for teachers and other specified purposes. The teaching work in these colleges is conducted according to the prescribed government and university rules. In the present study, students studying at the undergraduate level in such colleges are considered students of aided colleges.

Self-Financed College: In the present study, a self-financed college refers to a college whose educational and administrative operations are primarily financed through fees collected from students and other self-financing sources, and which does not receive regular government grants. In the present study, students studying at the undergraduate level in such colleges are considered students of self-financed colleges.

Undergraduate-Level Students: In the present study, undergraduate-level students refer to those students who are enrolled in an undergraduate programme at a recognized college. Students studying in the classes, programmes, and colleges specified by the researcher have been included in the population of the study.

Life Skills: Life skills refer to the essential abilities, competencies, and practical skills through which an individual can effectively cope with situations in daily life, make appropriate decisions, solve problems, communicate effectively and establish relationships with others, and appropriately regulate emotions and stress. In the present study, life skills refer to the scores obtained by students on the standardized/researcher-developed scale used for measuring life skills. Higher scores on the scale indicate higher levels of life skills, whereas lower scores indicate lower levels of life skills.

Objectives of the Research Study

To make a comparative study of the life skills of students studying at the undergraduate level in aided and self-financed colleges.

Hypotheses of the Research Study

There is no significant difference in the life skills of students studying at the undergraduate level in aided and self-financed colleges.

Data Collection Tools



To measure life skills, the “Life Skills Scale” developed by Dr. Anjum Ahmad and Mrs. Sabba Parveen was used. This scale is helpful in measuring various life-skill dimensions among students, such as decision-making, problem-solving, communication skills, self-awareness, empathy, stress management, creativity, leadership ability, and critical thinking. The participants recorded their responses on a five-point scale.

Sample

In the present study, a sample of 500 students studying at the undergraduate level in colleges of Kanpur district was selected through the stratified random sampling technique. The students were classified on the basis of gender and area.

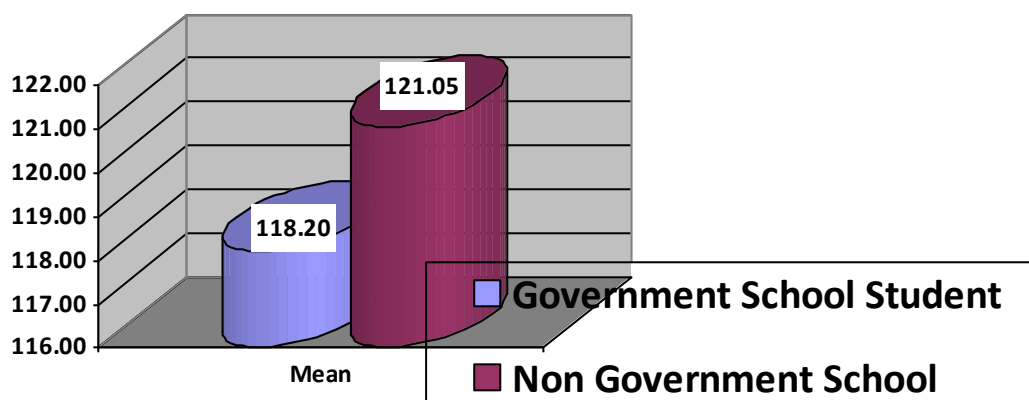
Definition of Hypotheses

Table No. 01

Status of Life Skills among Undergraduate Students Studying in Aided and Self-Financed Colleges

Type of College	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	C.R.	Level of Significance	Table Value	Result
Aided Colleges	248	118.20	15.54	1.88	0.05	1.96	Not Significant (Accepted)
Self-Financed Colleges	252	121.05	14.97				

Graph No. 01



Analysis of the Data : The above Table No. 01 shows that the mean scores of life skills obtained by 248 students studying in aided colleges and 252 students studying in self-financed colleges at the undergraduate level are 118.20 and 121.05, respectively. The standard deviations are 15.54 and 14.97, respectively. The critical ratio (C.R.) at the 0.05 level of significance with 498 degrees of freedom is found to be 1.88, which is lower than the table value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance for 498 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the obtained value is not significant.

Interpretation of the Result: Since the obtained C.R. value is not significant, the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted. This indicates that there is **no significant difference in the life skills of undergraduate students studying in aided and self-financed colleges.**

Discussion of the Result

The development of life skills mainly depends on students' personal efforts, counselling, teacher guidance, interaction with peers, and the social and educational environment.

The type of college funding, whether aided or self-financed, does not appear to be a decisive factor in the development of life skills.

Aided colleges generally provide better access to resources, libraries, training programmes, and social activities. The findings of the study indicate that physical resources or financial support do not have a substantial impact on the development of life skills.

The development of life skills depends largely on students' intrinsic motivation, self-management, eagerness to learn, and ability to deal with different situations.

Main Finding

No significant difference was found in the life skills of students studying at the undergraduate level in aided and self-financed colleges.

Result

The result indicates that the development of students' life skills does not depend solely on whether the college is aided or self-financed. Rather, other factors such as family environment, social circumstances, personal experiences, teachers' behaviour, co-curricular activities, and individual efforts also play an important role. At present, students in both types of colleges are provided opportunities to participate in various academic, social, and co-curricular activities along with their regular education. Therefore, it is natural that the level of life skills among students of both groups was found to be similar

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