A STUDY ON LIFE SKILLS AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN CUDDALORE DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the development of life skills among college students in Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu, focusing on socio-demographic, institutional, and economic influences. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from 160 undergraduate students through a structured questionnaire covering ten life skill domains. The findings reveal disparities based on institutional type, domicile, and parental background. Students from aided colleges and urban areas performed better than those in government colleges and rural settings. Gender differences showed females excelling in empathy and interpersonal skills, while males scored slightly higher in decision-making. The study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions such as experiential learning, rural outreach programs, and institutional support to bridge gaps and promote equitable skill development for holistic student growth.

Keywords: Life skills, college students, Cuddalore, self-awareness, demographic analysis, higher education.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Life skills encompass a broad range of cognitive, emotional, and social competencies that enable individuals to effectively manage everyday challenges, build and maintain relationships, and make sound decisions in various life contexts. These skills are particularly crucial for college students, who often face the dual challenge of adapting to independent living and preparing for professional roles. The transition from the structured confines of formal education to the multifaceted demands of adult life requires a strong foundation in life skills.

In the context of a rapidly changing global environment shaped by technological innovation, economic fluctuations, and shifting social norms, the cultivation of life skills has emerged as a critical focus for educational systems. Institutions worldwide recognize the importance of equipping students with the tools needed to thrive in an interconnected and dynamic world. Cuddalore, a semi-urban district in Tamil Nadu, represents a distinctive socio-economic and educational milieu. The district has made commendable progress in improving literacy rates and expanding access to education. However, significant challenges remain, particularly in fostering the equitable development of life skills among students from diverse socio-economic

backgrounds. Factors such as limited resources, varying levels of parental education, and disparities in access to extracurricular and skill-building programs contribute to this gap.

This study delves into the current state of life skills development among college students in Cuddalore, with a focus on essential competencies such as self-awareness, effective communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving. The research seeks to examine demographic differences, identify key factors influencing life skill acquisition, and propose actionable strategies to address identified gaps. By doing so, the study aims to support the holistic development of students and empower them to navigate the complexities of modern life with confidence and resilience.

2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The importance of life skills education is extensively recognized in global frameworks, such as the World Health Organization's (WHO) Life Skills Education model and UNICEF's Adolescence Education Programme. These frameworks underline the need for a holistic approach to developing cognitive, emotional, and social competencies. Life skills include critical thinking, decision-making, self-awareness, empathy, communication, and interpersonal relationship abilities, forming the foundation for personal and professional growth. Research has consistently demonstrated the transformative impact of life skills education.

Kumar and Gupta (2016) emphasize its role in fostering youth development, noting significant improvements in academic performance, self-confidence, and resilience. Similarly, Mishra (2018) highlights the effectiveness of structured programs in promoting positive behaviors and mitigating risky behaviors among adolescents. Rao (2021) brings attention to the regional disparities in life skills education, revealing how socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural differences create unequal access. Urban students, for example, often benefit from better resources and exposure compared to their rural counterparts, which affects their overall competency development.

Sharma (2020) explores gender-based differences in life skills acquisition, identifying trends where female students excel in emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills, while male students demonstrate higher proficiency in critical thinking and decision-making. Patel (2019) advocates for integrating life skills education into mainstream curricula through experiential learning approaches, ensuring students gain practical application alongside theoretical knowledge. Despite these insights, a notable gap exists in understanding life skills development among college students in semi-urban and rural areas, particularly in regions like Cuddalore. While research has extensively covered urban contexts, limited studies address the unique challenges and opportunities in such settings. This study seeks to bridge that gap by exploring the state of life skills education among college students in Cuddalore, analyzing socio-economic and demographic disparities, and proposing interventions to enhance outcomes. The findings aim to contribute to a more inclusive framework for life skills education, tailored to the needs of diverse communities.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive research design to systematically examine the state of life skills among college students in Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu. The descriptive approach is

particularly well-suited for identifying patterns, relationships, and influencing factors, enabling a deeper understanding of the research problem. The objectives of the study include assessing the current levels of life skills across ten key domains, identifying demographic, educational, and socio-economic factors that influence life skills development, comparing competencies across gender, educational streams, and urban versus rural domiciles, and proposing interventions to address gaps, particularly in semi-urban and rural settings.

The research was conducted in Cuddalore, a district characterized by its blend of semi-urban and rural environments. This region provides a unique setting for studying life skills, given its socio-economic diversity and disparities in resources and opportunities. By focusing on government, self-financed, and aided colleges, the study captures a broad educational spectrum. This diversity is crucial to understanding the varying influences on life skills development across different types of institutions and student demographics.

The sample comprised 160 undergraduate students selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across gender, domicile, and educational streams. Equal representation of male and female students allowed for gender-based comparisons, while students from urban, semi-urban, and rural areas were included to explore geographic disparities. The study also covered arts, science, and commerce disciplines to assess how academic focus impacts life skills development. Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire designed to assess competencies in ten life skills domains: self-awareness, communication, interpersonal relationships, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, coping with stress, and coping with emotions. The instrument included both closed-ended questions for quantitative data and open-ended questions for qualitative insights. A pilot study conducted prior to the main survey confirmed the reliability of the instrument, with a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency. The data collection process was carried out over three months through in-person surveys at participating colleges. Students were briefed on the study's objectives, and written informed consent was obtained to ensure transparency and ethical compliance. Questionnaires were administered under the supervision of the research team to minimize errors and address any questions from respondents.

Data analysis involved a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, were used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics, including ANOVA and t-tests, were applied to identify significant differences across gender, educational streams, and domiciles. Thematic analysis of open-ended responses provided additional contextual insights into students' perspectives on life skills development.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Particulars	Classification	Number of Respondents (N=160)	Percentage (100%)
Gender	Male	76	47.7
	Female	84	52.3
	Total	**160**	**100.0**

Age	19 Years	77	48.2
	20 Years	69	42.9
	21 Years	10	6.3
	22 Years	4	2.6
	Total	**160**	**100.0**
Domicile	Rural	104	65.3
	Urban	56	34.7
	Total	**160**	**100.0**
Religion	Hindu	140	87.8
	Christian	11	6.6
	Muslim	8	5.1
	Others	1	0.6
	Total	**160**	**100.0**
Community	BC	33	20.4
	MBC	78	47.8
	SC	48	30.2
	ST	2	1.3
	Total	**160**	**100.0**
Annual Income of the family	Below Rs. 50,000	62	38.8
	Rs. 50,001-Rs 1,00,000	80	50.3
	Rs. 1,00,001-Rs 1,50,000	10	6.3
	Rs.1,50,001 – Rs 2,00,000	4	2.5
	Above Rs 2,00,000	4	2.5
	Total	**160**	**100.0**
Father's Education	Illiterate	39	24.5
	Primary School	19	11.8
	Middle School	24	15.0
	High School	25	15.5
	Intermediate or Diploma	33	20.4
	Degrees	17	10.3
	Professional	4	2.5
	Total	**160**	**100.0**
Mother's Education	Illiterate	10	6.0
	Primary School	17	10.6
	Middle School	13	8.0
	High School	43	26.5
	Intermediate or Diploma	47	29.4
	Degrees	26	15.9
	Professional	6	3.5
	Total	**160**	**100.0**
Father's Occupation	Unemployment (Expired)	11	7.0
	Agriculture	49	30.5
	Daily labour	57	35.9
	Self-employment	17	10.9
	Govt.Jobs	5	3.2

	Private Jobs	20	12.5
	Total	**160**	**100.0**
Mother's Occupation	Unemployment (Expired)	11	6.6
	Agriculture	21	13.1
	Daily labour	31	19.2
	Self-employment	19	11.8
	Govt.Jobs	13	8.0
	Private Jobs	10	6.1
	Home Makers	56	35.1
	Total	**160**	**100.0**
Category of the College	Govt. Colleges	77	48.1
	Aided College	14	8.8
	Self-finance Colleges	69	43.1
	Total	**160**	**100.0**
Stream of Study	Science	73	45.9
	Arts	87	54.1
	Total	**160**	**100.0**

The data reveals that female respondents constitute 52.3% of the total sample, slightly outnumbering males at 47.7%. This near-equal gender distribution indicates a balanced representation, making it essential to ensure that initiatives or interventions consider the perspectives and needs of both genders equally. The majority of respondents, 48.2%, are 19 years old, followed by 42.9% who are 20 years old. This indicates that the sample primarily comprises young adults, a critical age group where career decisions and educational priorities are significant. Programs tailored to address the aspirations and challenges of this demographic would be beneficial. Rural respondents dominate the sample at 65.3%, while urban respondents make up 34.7%. This highlights a significant rural representation, emphasizing the need to address rural-specific challenges such as access to education, skill development, and digital literacy to bridge the rural-urban divide. The respondents are predominantly Hindu, accounting for 87.8% of the sample. Other religions, including Christian (6.6%), Muslim (5.1%), and Others (0.6%), form smaller proportions. While the majority religion dominates, it is crucial to ensure inclusivity and address the needs of minority groups sensitively. The largest community group represented is MBC, at 47.8%, followed by SC (30.2%), BC (20.4%), and ST (1.3%). This distribution indicates a significant presence of socially and economically backward classes, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to uplift these communities through education, training, and employment opportunities. In terms of annual family income, 50.3% of respondents fall within the Rs. 50,001–Rs. 1,00,000 bracket, with 38.8% earning below Rs. 50,000. This suggests that a significant portion of families belong to low-income groups, highlighting the importance of financial aid, scholarships, and affordable education programs to alleviate economic constraints. A significant proportion of fathers, 24.5%, are illiterate, with others having varying levels of education, such as intermediate or diploma (20.4%) and high school (15.5%). This indicates a considerable literacy gap among fathers, underscoring the need for community awareness programs to promote the value of education for future generations. For mothers, 29.4% have intermediate or diploma qualifications, but 6% are illiterate, indicating progress in female education but with room for improvement. Empowering

mothers through continuous learning opportunities can positively influence household decision-making and children's education.

Daily labor is the most common occupation among fathers, involving 35.9% of respondents, followed by agriculture (30.5%). This indicates a high dependency on unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. Initiatives to enhance skill development and provide alternative livelihood options would benefit these families. Among mothers, 35.1% are homemakers, with a smaller proportion engaged in agriculture (13.1%) or daily labor (19.2%). This highlights the untapped potential of homemakers who can be empowered through vocational training or small-scale entrepreneurial opportunities. Nearly half of the respondents, 48.1%, are enrolled in government colleges, with the rest divided between self-financing colleges (43.1%) and aided colleges (8.8%). This suggests that government institutions play a vital role in providing education, and efforts to improve their quality and infrastructure should be prioritized. Finally, a majority of respondents, 54.1%, are from the arts stream, while 45.9% are from the science stream. This indicates a slightly higher inclination toward arts education, which calls for an equitable distribution of resources and opportunities across disciplines, fostering interdisciplinary learning to broaden career prospects.

Table 2: Students' Life skills and categories of colleges

| Life Skills | Categories of Colleges | | | | | | F value | P value |
| | Government (n=338) | | Aided (n=64) | | Self-Finance (n=284) | | | |
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD		
Self-Awareness	24.0	8.41	28.28	3.74	28.57	3.82	39.841	.000
Communication	23.68	8.04	28.12	3.40	27.23	4.07	30.209	.000
Interpersonal Relationship	24.27	8.28	28.92	3.64	27.08	3.80	22.853	.000
Empathy	24.88	8.63	30.06	3.43	28.15	3.55	28.289	.000
Critical Thinking	23.02	3.52	24.57	3.12	23.94	3.49	8.542	.000
Creative Thinking	22.66	3.61	23.73	3.10	23.55	3.55	5.882	.003
Decision Making	26.13	4.06	27.59	3.64	26.80	4.03	4.494	.012
Problem Solving	26.22	3.98	28.40	4.32	27.01	3.90	9.109	.000
Coping with Stress	27.16	4.05	29.26	3.42	27.61	4.07	7.470	.001
Coping with Emotions	21.73	3.62	23.93	3.70	22.64	3.70	11.686	.000

The study compares life skill development among students from government, aided, and self-financed colleges, revealing significant differences across all life skills, as indicated by low p-values (p <.05) in statistical analysis. Students in self-financed (28.57) and aided (28.28) colleges have significantly higher mean scores for self-awareness than students in government (24.0) colleges. This suggests that kids attending self-financed and assisted schools would have greater access to opportunities or settings that promote self-awareness. The associated F-value (39.841) highlights a significant difference between groups.

The highest scores in communication skills are obtained by aided college students (28.12), self-financed students (27.23), and government college students (23.68). This pattern implies that teaching strategies or institutional resources in self-financed and assisted colleges may be more effective in fostering the growth of communication skills. Significant variances are once more

shown by the F-value (30.209). In terms of interpersonal interactions, self-financed students score higher than government students (24.27), while aided college students score the most (28.92). The F-value (22.853) indicates that assisted institutions offer superior social or collaborative chances. Similar trends may be seen in empathy, where government students (24.88) score the lowest, self-financed students (28.15) score moderately, and aided students (30.06) score the best. The F-value (28.289) supports this continuous trend, which shows systemic variations in cultivating emotional understanding. Even if the mean differences are not as noticeable, aided students (24.57) score better in critical thinking than government students (23.02) and self-financed students (23.94). The F-value (8.542) and p-value show significant group differences despite the smaller gap, suggesting that assisted institutions have better curricula or instructional procedures. The lowest overall differences are shown in creative thinking, where government students (22.66) and self-financed students (23.55) are marginally behind aided students (23.73). This smaller difference would suggest a more consistent focus on encouraging creativity across institutions, even if it is still significant (F = 5.882, p =.003). Similar trends may be seen in decision-making abilities, where government college students (26.13), self-financed students (26.80), and aided students (27.59) score highest. The moderate differences indicated by the relatively close scores are corroborated by the p-value (.012) and F-value (4.494). Again, aided students score highest on problem-solving (28.40), followed by government students (26.22) and self-financed students (27.01). The F-value (9.109), which emphasizes this pattern, indicates that assisted colleges might provide superior opportunities for experiential learning or problem-solving training. In terms of stress management, government students score somewhat lower (27.16) than aided college students (29.26), who are followed by self-financed students (27.61). The F-value (7.470) suggests that institutional support systems in self-financed and assisted universities may better prepare students to handle stress. Finally, aided students (23.93) surpass self-financed (22.64) and government students (21.73) in terms of emotional coping, which is consistent with the overall pattern. This result emphasizes differences in emotional resilience throughout institutions, as does the F-value (11.686). All things considered, the facts consistently demonstrate that government and self-financed college students fall short of aided colleges in every life skill. In most areas, government colleges receive the lowest scores, while self-financed colleges usually come in second. These findings imply that, whether as a result of improved resources, support networks, or instructional strategies, assisted institutions offer a more favorable setting for the development of critical life skills. This discrepancy emphasizes how government colleges must implement focused initiatives to close the gap and improve students' development of all life skills.

Table 3: Students' Life skills and steam of course studying

Life Skills	Steam of Courses studying				F value	P value
	Arts (n=371)		Science (n=315)			
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD		
Self-Awareness	25.68	8.02	27.09	5.08	24.370	.007
Communication	24.87	7.60	26.37	5.01	25.154	.003
Interpersonal Relationship	25.42	7.78	26.39	4.85	31.324	.057
Empathy	26.00	8.04	27.55	4.90	34.492	.003

Critical Thinking	23.50	3.74	23.60	3.21	7.927	.722
Creative Thinking	23.23	3.72	23.01	3.37	2.169	.424
Decision Making	26.59	4.25	26.49	3.77	5.820	.760
Problem Solving	26.79	4.17	26.70	3.85	.646	.777
Coping with Stress	27.39	4.14	27.72	3.92	1.991	.291
Coping with Emotions	22.63	3.74	21.93	3.65	.074	.014

With an F-value of 24.370 and a p-value of.007, science students score higher on self-awareness ($\bar{x}$ = 27.09, SD = 5.08) than arts students ($\bar{x}$ = 25.68, SD = 8.02). This implies that because science curricula are analytical in character, students in these streams may be more capable of self-reflection and comprehension. According to a significant F-value of 25.154 and p-value of.003, science students ($\bar{x}$ = 26.37, SD = 5.01) do better than arts students ($\bar{x}$ = 24.87, SD = 7.60) in communication abilities. This benefit can be influenced by the rigorous and technical requirements of science courses. Again, science students score somewhat higher ($\bar{x}$ = 26.39, SD = 4.85) than arts students ($\bar{x}$ = 25.42, SD = 7.78) in interpersonal connections. The p-value of.057, however, shows that this difference is not statistically significant, indicating that interpersonal skills are similarly fostered by both streams. Science students ($\bar{x}$ = 27.55, SD = 4.90) outperform arts students ($\bar{x}$ = 26.00, SD = 8.04) in empathy, which demonstrates a significant difference (p =.003). This would suggest that scientific classes participate in settings that foster emotional intelligence, perhaps through cooperative learning or scenarios involving problem-solving.

There is no significant difference between the two streams' mean scores for critical thinking (science $\bar{x}$ = 23.60, SD = 3.21; arts $\bar{x}$ = 23.50, SD = 3.74), as indicated by the F-value of 7.927 and the p-value of.722. This implies that science and art curriculum place equal emphasis on critical thinking. With a p-value of.424, creative thinking also exhibits little variation (arts $\bar{x}$ = 23.23, SD = 3.72; science $\bar{x}$ = 23.01, SD = 3.37), suggesting that students in both streams are equally creative.

With an F-value of 5.820 and a p-value of.760, which indicate no significant difference, students in the arts ($\bar{x}$ = 26.59, SD = 4.25) and science ($\bar{x}$ = 26.49, SD = 3.77) perform almost identically when it comes to decision-making skills. Students in the arts ($\bar{x}$ = 26.79, SD = 4.17) and science ($\bar{x}$ = 26.70, SD = 3.85) score similarly on the problem-solving skills scale. The p-value of.777 indicates that both streams foster this competence equally. Science students had a little higher mean score ($\bar{x}$ = 27.72, SD = 3.92) than arts students ($\bar{x}$ = 27.39, SD = 4.14), but there is no statistically significant difference, according to the p-value of.291. It's interesting to note that, with a significant p-value of.014, arts students perform better than science students when it comes to managing with emotions ($\bar{x}$ = 22.63, SD = 3.74). This implies that because the arts are an expressive and introspective field, students may be better able to control their emotions.

In general, science students perform better than arts students in domains like empathy, communication, and self-awareness, perhaps as a result of their curriculum's structure and interaction. Nonetheless, arts students demonstrate emotional coping skills that are in line with the reflective and expressive nature of their coursework. There are very few variations in other skills including critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving,

which indicate that both streams place equal emphasis on them. This analysis emphasizes how academic disciplines shape certain life skills and suggests that skill development in each stream could be further enhanced by customized interventions.

Table 4: Students' Life skills and their domicile

Life Skills	Domicile				F value	P value
	Rural (n=448)		Urban (n=238)			
	mean	*SD*	*mean*	*SD*		
Self-Awareness	26.12	7.45	27.43	6.11	3.963	0.049
Communication	25.23	7.02	26.91	5.71	5.212	0.023
Inter-personal Relationship	25.83	7.18	26.98	5.91	6.371	0.013
Empathy	26.78	7.11	27.64	5.78	5.748	0.021
Critical Thinking	23.45	3.73	24.15	3.29	2.184	0.015
Creative Thinking	23.07	3.45	24.21	3.14	4.092	0.000
Decision making	26.50	4.31	27.56	3.63	8.964	0.004
Problem Solving	26.89	4.04	27.65	3.81	3.904	0.019
Coping with Stress	27.50	4.15	28.17	4.05	0.813	0.040
Coping with Emotion	22.45	3.88	22.72	3.49	1.456	0.232

There are noticeable variations in a number of life skills when students' life skills are analyzed according to where they live (rural vs. urban). The findings are shown in Table 4.42, which compares the mean and standard deviation (SD) for each life skill between students in rural areas (n = 448) and urban areas (n = 238). Additionally, the F-value and associated P-value for statistical significance are included. Self-awareness shows a significant difference ($F=3.963, p=0.049$), with urban students (mean = 27.43, SD = 6.11) scoring higher than their rural counterparts (mean = 26.12, SD = 7.45). Likewise, there is a notable difference in communication ($F=5.212, p=0.023$), with urban students outperforming rural students (mean = 26.91, SD = 5.71). According to these results, urban students might be more self-aware and have stronger communication abilities, perhaps as a result of their increased exposure to a variety of settings and socialization possibilities. Students in urban areas (mean = 26.98, SD = 5.91) again outperform those in rural areas (mean = 25.83, SD = 7.18) in interpersonal relationships ($F=6.371, p=0.013$). In a similar vein, there is a notable difference in empathy between urban and rural students (mean = 27.64, SD = 5.78 vs. 26.78, SD = 7.11) ($F=5.748, p=0.021$). These variations imply that urban environments might offer more chances for social interaction, which would develop empathy and social skills. Urban students outperform rural students (mean = 23.45, SD = 3.73) in critical thinking, with a significant difference ($F=2.184, p=0.015$). Similarly, there is a highly significant difference in creative thinking ($F=4.092, p<0.001$) between urban and rural students, with the former scoring higher (mean = 24.21, SD = 3.14) than the latter (mean = 23.07, SD = 3.45). These findings suggest that urban settings might foster critical and imaginative thinking, perhaps as a result of easy access to a wide range of cultural and educational resources. Additionally, there is a substantial difference in decision-making ($F=8.964$, p=0.004F = 8.964,

p = 0.004F = 8.964, p=0.004), with urban students outperforming rural students (mean = 26.50, SD = 4.31) (mean = 27.56, SD = 3.63). The same is true for problem-solving (F=3.904,p=0.019F = 3.904, p = 0.019F=3.904,p=0.019), where students in urban areas (mean = 27.65, SD = 3.81) outperform those in rural areas (mean = 26.89, SD = 4.04). These results imply that metropolitan settings might offer greater chances to hone and improve decision-making and problem-solving abilities. According to coping with stress, there is a significant difference (F=0.813,p=0.040F = 0.813, p = 0.040F=0.813,p=0.040), with urban students scoring somewhat better than rural students (mean = 27.50, SD = 4.15; mean = 28.17, SD = 4.05). However, there is no significant difference in the ability to cope with emotions (F=1.456,p=0.232F = 1.456, p = 0.232F=1.456,p=0.232), suggesting that there may not be a substantial difference in this capacity between students in rural and urban areas. According to the findings, urban students perform better overall in the majority of life skills, with notable variations seen in self-awareness, communication, interpersonal relationships, empathy, critical and creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, and stress management. The results point to the possible impact of environmental factors on life skills development and point to the necessity of focused interventions to help rural students in these areas.

Table 5: Students' Life skills and their Religion

Life skills	Religion of the Respondents								F value	P value
	Hindu (n=602)		Christian (n=45)		Muslim (n=35)		Others (n=4)			
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD		
Self-Awareness	26.32	6.92	26.20	6.58	27.10	6.02	29.80	4.54	0.433	0.728
Communication	25.51	6.65	25.65	6.85	26.90	5.55	31.70	2.36	1.701	0.160
Inter-personal Relationship	25.87	6.62	25.55	6.72	25.62	6.13	27.30	3.83	0.140	0.938
Empathy	26.83	6.91	26.10	6.92	26.50	5.11	29.80	3.45	0.464	0.705
Critical Thinking	23.58	3.56	23.78	3.22	24.10	3.53	25.10	1.60	0.426	0.738
Creative Thinking	23.22	3.63	23.15	3.59	22.88	3.37	24.60	0.54	0.340	0.798
Decision making	26.60	4.11	26.35	4.01	26.80	3.32	28.10	2.63	0.278	0.847
Problem Solving	26.90	3.96	26.95	4.08	25.90	4.64	28.80	2.10	1.042	0.382
Coping with Stress	27.57	4.06	27.95	3.93	27.20	3.48	30.30	2.95	0.914	0.428
Coping with Emotion	22.38	3.70	21.92	3.56	22.30	3.79	26.10	1.80	1.626	0.185

By comparing the mean scores (‾x) and standard deviations (SD) for life skills among four religious groups—Hindu, Christian, Muslim, and Others—this table investigates the connection between students' religion and life skills. F-values and p-values are also included in the analysis to evaluate statistical significance.

The mean ratings for self-awareness are rather similar for the various religious groups: Muslims score 27.10, Christians score 26.20, Hindus score 26.32, and others score 29.80. The p-value (0.728) shows no statistically significant differences in spite of this fluctuation. Comparably, the others group scores significantly higher (31.70) on communication skills than Hindus (25.51), Christians (25.65), and Muslims (26.90). However, the p-value (0.160) indicates no significant difference, indicating that these differences may be the result of sample size variation rather than innate disparities.

The mean ratings for interpersonal interactions are closely clustered by religion, with Muslims scoring 25.62, Christians 25.55, Hindus 25.87, and Others somewhat higher at 27.30. The p-value (0.938), however, suggests that these variations are not statistically significant. A similar trend is observed for empathy, where Hindus score 26.83, Christians 26.10, Muslims 26.50, and others score the highest at 29.80. Despite some variation, the p-value (0.705) suggests these differences are not significant.

Scores for critical thinking are generally similar across groups, with Muslims scoring 24.10, Christians scoring 23.78, Hindus scoring 23.58, and others scoring 25.10. The differences are not statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value of 0.738. Hindus score 23.22, Christians 23.15, Muslims 22.88, and others score slightly higher at 24.60, indicating little diversity in innovative thinking. The absence of significant differences is further supported by the p-value (0.798).

All groups score similarly when it comes to decision-making abilities: Muslims score 26.80, Christians score 26.35, Hindus score 26.60, and others score 28.10. There are no discernible differences, according to the p-value of 0.847. Hindus score 26.90, Christians score 26.95, Muslims score 25.90, while others score somewhat higher at 28.80 when it comes to problem-solving abilities. According to the p-value (0.382), these differences are not statistically significant.

Hindus score 27.57, Christians score 27.95, Muslims score 27.20, and others score 30.30 when it comes to coping with stress. The p-value (0.428), however, suggests that there are no noteworthy variations. Last but not least, the others group once more has the highest score (26.10) for emotional coping, whereas Muslims (22.30), Christians (21.92), and Hindus (22.38) exhibit lower and comparable results. There are no statistically significant differences, according to the p-value of 0.185.

Overall, the research shows that there are no notable variations in any of the evaluated life skills, suggesting that they are largely similar across religious groups. Although the others group frequently receives somewhat higher scores, this could be more due to their limited sample size than to real differences. The results indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship between religion and the development of life skills in this dataset's kids.

Table 6: Students' Life skills Assessment and their Community

Life skills	Community								F value	P value
	BC (n=142)		MBC (n=328)		SC (n=207)		ST (n=9)			
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD		
Self-Awareness	27.04	5.98	26.33	6.49	25.93	7.84	24.11	8.57	1.065	0.363
Communication	26.54	5.65	25.49	6.17	25.12	7.59	22.88	8.13	1.874	0.133
Inter-personal Relationship	26.19	5.58	25.98	6.26	25.52	7.66	24.55	8.63	0.452	0.716
Empathy	27.12	5.57	26.87	6.55	26.24	7.84	25.66	9.30	0.634	0.593
Critical Thinking	23.80	3.30	23.34	3.56	23.70	3.58	23.44	3.08	0.767	0.513
Creative Thinking	23.45	3.33	22.85	3.53	23.34	3.71	23.33	5.04	1.325	0.265
Decision making	26.67	3.37	26.35	3.99	26.78	4.41	26.22	5.95	0.545	0.652

Problem Solving	26.94	4.09	26.60	3.87	26.94	4.15	24.44	5.31	1.390	0.245
Coping with Stress	27.89	3.94	27.29	4.18	27.72	3.88	27.00	4.44	0.947	0.417
Coping with Emotion	22.27	3.49	22.34	3.66	22.31	3.90	22.11	5.15	0.020	0.996

By examining the mean scores (¯x) and standard deviations (SD) for each life skill, this table assesses the connection between students' life skills and their communities (BC, MBC, SC, and ST). The statistical significance of the score differences is indicated by the F-values and p-values. BC students have the highest mean scores (¯x = 27.04, SD = 5.98) for self-awareness, followed by MBC (¯x = 26.33, SD = 6.49), SC (¯x = 25.93, SD = 7.84), and ST (¯x = 24.11, SD = 8.57). The p-value (0.363) shows no significant difference between the groups, despite a little variation. Regarding communication, a similar pattern is seen, with BC students scoring best (¯x = 26.54, SD = 5.65) and ST students scoring lowest (¯x = 22.88, SD = 8.13). The p-value (0.133), however, indicates that these variations are not statistically significant. The mean scores for interpersonal connections fall between 26.19 and 24.55 for BC and ST students, respectively. There is no discernible variance, as indicated by the p-value (0.716). Similarly, when it comes to empathy, BC students perform best (¯x = 27.12, SD = 5.57) and ST students perform worst (¯x = 25.66, SD = 9.30). The p-value (0.593) shows no significant correlation between empathy levels and community, despite the observed variances. All groups' scores in critical thinking are quite similar, with BC students outperforming the others by a small margin (¯x = 23.80, SD = 3.30). No significant difference is confirmed by the p-value of 0.513. The results are almost the same for creative thinking as well, with MBC students scoring slightly lower (¯x = 22.85, SD = 3.53) and BC students at the top (¯x = 23.45, SD = 3.33). The p-value of 0.265 indicates that there are no notable variations among groups.

The mean scores for decision-making skills are similar across all groups, with SC students scoring 26.78 and ST students scoring 26.22. A p-value of 0.652 suggests that there are no significant differences. Similarly, the scores are consistent when it comes to problem-solving abilities, with ST students scoring marginally lower (¯x = 24.44) and BC and SC students scoring similarly high (¯x = 26.94). Nevertheless, there is no statistically significant variance indicated by the p-value (0.245). BC students had the highest mean score (¯x = 27.89, SD = 3.94) when it comes to stress management, followed by SC, MBC, and ST students. The p-value (0.417), however, shows no discernible variations. Lastly, the scores for managing emotions are strikingly comparable for every group, and a p-value of 0.999 indicates that there is no significant correlation between community and this ability. All things considered, the research shows that although the life skills ratings of the various communities differ slightly, none of these differences are statistically significant. This suggests that the development of life skills among students is relatively uniform across communities, with no group showing a distinct advantage or disadvantage.

Table 7: Students' Life skills and the Monthly family Income (Regression analysis)

Life skills	Descriptive		Model Summary			ANOVA		Coefficients		
	$\overline{x}$	SD	R	R Square	Ajusted R Square	F	Sig.	B	T	Sig.
Self-Awareness	26.45	6.90	0.125a	0.016	0.014	10.562	0.001b	24.735	40.112	0.000
Communication	25.72	6.60	0.146a	0.021	0.019	15.284	0.000b	23.62	10.352	0.000

Interpersonal Relationship	25.91	6.64	0.060a	0.004	0.003	2.612	0.109b	25.102	42.156	0.000
Empathy	26.81	6.85	0.078a	0.007	0.005	4.128	0.046b	25.700	41.853	0.000
Critical Thinking	23.60	3.55	0.077a	0.007	0.005	4.007	0.047b	23.050	72.923	0.000
Creative Thinking	23.20	3.60	0.115a	0.013	0.012	9.200	0.002b	22.350	69.712	0.000
Decision Making	26.61	4.05	0.090a	0.008	0.006	5.251	0.024b	25.890	71.372	0.000
Problem Solving	26.83	4.06	0.055a	0.004	0.002	2.012	0.156b	26.401	72.614	0.000
Coping with Stress	27.61	4.08	0.008a	0.001	-0.001	0.102	0.890b	27.590	75.521	0.000
Coping with Emotions	22.40	3.75	0.070a	0.005	0.004	3.200	0.044b	21.850	65.230	0.000

Based on statistical inference, the examination of 160 respondents' life skills data provides insights into the connections between different talents and their results. An R^2 value of 0.016 and $p=0.001$ demonstrate a strong link between self-awareness and the outcome variable, with a mean score of 26.45 and a standard deviation of 6.90. A dependable and statistically sound model is indicated by the high T-value of 40.112 and the F-statistic of 10.562, while the modest percentage of variation explained raises the possibility of other influencing factors. Communication shows a somewhat larger association with an R^2 value of 0.021 and $p<0.001$, with a mean of 25.72 and a standard deviation of 6.60. The relevance of this ability in the outcomes under study is further supported by the F-statistic of 15.284 and the T-value of 10.352. The F-statistic of 2.612 indicates that interpersonal relationships, with a mean score of 25.91 and standard deviation of 6.64, show a non-significant link ($R^2 = 0.004$, $p=0.109$).

With an F-statistic of 4.128, empathy exhibits a moderate but statistically significant association ($R^2 = 0.007$, $p=0.046$), with a mean of 26.81 and a standard deviation of 6.85. Similarly, there is a slight but significant correlation between critical thinking and a mean of 23.60 and a standard deviation of 3.55 ($R^2 = 0.007$, $p=0.047$). Although the small variance described suggests additional possible contributing factors, both skills demonstrate their applicability.

With a mean score of 23.20 and a standard deviation of 3.60, creative thinking shows predictive potential in situations that call for creative problem-solving and exhibits a significant link ($R^2 = 0.013$, $p=0.002$). With a mean of 26.61 and a standard deviation of 4.05, decision-making likewise exhibits a weak but significant correlation ($R^2 = 0.008$, $p=0.024$). Notwithstanding their small direct effect sizes, these results highlight the significance of these abilities.

Both problem-solving and stress-coping have non-significant correlations ($R^2 = 0.004$, $p=0.156$; $R^2 = 0.001$, $p=0.890$, respectively). The mean for problem-solving is 26.83, with a standard deviation of 4.06. These findings imply that their impact might be more nuanced or indirect. With a mean score of 22.40 and a standard deviation of 3.75, coping with emotions has a slight but significant impact ($R^2 = 0.005$, $p=0.044$), suggesting that it is relevant in situations involving emotional regulation.

Overall, the research shows that the variance explained by individual talents is typically minimal, even if numerous life skills show statistically significant connections with the outcomes. While some skills, like interpersonal interactions and stress management, seem to have few direct consequences, others, like communication and self-awareness, emerge as more significant predictions. These results point to the need for greater investigation into possible mediating or moderating factors as well as more intricate relationships that might help clarify how life skills affect results.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the disparities in life skill development among college students in Cuddalore and enhance their competencies, several strategic recommendations are proposed. First, targeted programs should be developed to improve access to life skill training in rural areas, focusing on critical skills such as communication, critical thinking, and self-awareness. These initiatives can bridge the gap between urban and rural students by offering workshops and training sessions tailored to the unique challenges faced by rural communities. Second, institutional support in government colleges needs to be strengthened, as these institutions exhibit lower performance in most life skill domains compared to aided and self-financed colleges. Introducing dedicated life skill trainers, mentorship programs, and interactive activities can enhance student competencies. Collaboration with NGOs and industry partners can further improve the quality and reach of these programs. Third, integrating experiential learning methodologies into academic curricula can foster the practical application and retention of life skills. Techniques such as role-playing, group discussions, and problem-solving activities can benefit students across all types of institutions and disciplines, encouraging active engagement and deeper learning. Fourth, parental engagement and awareness programs should be emphasized to address socio-economic and educational disparities among families. Parental awareness initiatives can highlight the importance of life skills and the critical role of parents in fostering these competencies at home, creating a more supportive environment for students.

Fifth, while gender differences in life skills were minimal, gender-sensitive interventions should be implemented to further enhance abilities such as empathy, interpersonal relationships, and decision-making. Tailored approaches can ensure that both male and female students benefit equitably from these programs. Finally, leveraging technology for skill development can broaden access to life skill resources, particularly for students in remote areas. Digital tools, including online courses, webinars, and virtual mentoring, can complement on-campus training, ensuring that students have continuous opportunities for learning and development. Together, these recommendations offer a holistic approach to enhancing life skill competencies among college students, addressing both structural and individual-level disparities.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical role of life skills in shaping the personal and professional development of college students in Cuddalore. The findings reveal significant disparities influenced by institutional type, domicile, socio-economic background, and parental education levels. Students from aided colleges and urban areas consistently outperformed their counterparts in government colleges and rural settings across key life skill domains, such as

self-awareness, communication, and problem-solving. Gender differences, although minor, underscored the need for tailored interventions to enhance specific competencies like empathy and decision-making.

The study also underscores the impact of socio-economic and educational disparities among parents on the life skills of students, emphasizing the need for targeted strategies to address these inequities. Despite these challenges, the findings indicate that focused interventions, such as experiential learning, parental engagement, and institutional support, can significantly enhance life skill development. By addressing these gaps and fostering equitable access to life skill training, educational institutions in Cuddalore can empower students to navigate the complexities of modern life effectively. This research serves as a foundation for developing policies and programs aimed at bridging disparities and ensuring holistic student development, ultimately preparing them for successful transitions into their personal and professional lives.

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