

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Positive and Negative Factors Shaping University Students' Development of Life Skills

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## Ethical Statement

Verbal consent was obtained from all the participants before the data collection procedure.

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## Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest is present in the conduction or the reporting of this study.

## ABSTRACT

In today's world, it is more important than ever for university students to have a strong set of life skills in addition to their academic qualifications. The job market is becoming increasingly competitive, and employers are looking for employees who can think critically, solve problems, and communicate effectively. Additionally, the world is becoming increasingly complex and interconnected, and students need to be able to adapt to new challenges and thrive in this environment. The aim of this study is to reveal the factors that shape the life skills of university students. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through two open-ended survey questions from 176 students (91 males, 85 females) studying in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year of five different faculties and a vocational school of two state universities (Uludağ and Kastamonu), who wrote their answers on the form handed out to them by the researcher. The collected data were analyzed by using SPSS. The results show that students mostly reported the positive contributions of family, internship experiences, personal efforts, reading books, support from close friends and the supportive social environment. As negative factors, the fact that previous education was based on memorization and exam-oriented, the cultural mindset of the place they live, the restrictions imposed by the family, spending too much time on social media, the lack of an environment that enhances personal development, the family being too protective and even the use of physical violence and lack of social support were highlighted. To improve their students' life skills and prepare them better for life, universities can offer courses and workshops on life skills such as time management, financial literacy, communication skills, conflict resolution, and stress management. In addition, they can provide opportunities for students to get involved in extracurricular activities to develop a variety of life skills, such as leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving. They can also cooperate with employers and community organizations to offer internships and volunteer opportunities to help students to gain real-world experience and develop their life skills. This study included participants only from two state universities. Further research may include multiple universities (both state and private) and a higher number of participants. It can also include the views of faculty members and parents. Researchers can also explore the impact of life skills on student success, develop effective interventions for developing life skills, and examine the role of different stakeholders and factors in supporting student development of life skills.

Keywords: Higher education, university students, life skills.

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## INTRODUCTION

Life skills are essential for success in all aspects of life, including work, relationships, and personal development (WHO, 2020). Life skills is a concept that has been given great emphasis in recent years, defined as “adaptive and positive behavioral abilities that enable individuals to cope with daily needs and difficulties” (Pujar & Patil, 2016, p. 468). Life skills refer to the competencies that individuals must have to cope with continuous change. WHO has identified multiple life skills that a healthy individual should have, including decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, empathy skills, self-awareness skills, communication skills, interpersonal communication skills, emotional coping skills, stress coping skills, creative thinking skills and critical thinking skills.

University students are at a critical stage in their lives where they are developing their life skills and preparing for adulthood. It is becoming increasingly difficult for today's youth, a generation hit by two major global crises in less than 15 years, to transition to an autonomous life (Erakkuş, 2022, p.24). The OECD 2021 report discusses the importance of skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and teamwork, which are all essential life skills and underscores the role of these skills in supporting economic growth, social well-being, and individual resilience. (OECD, 2021). The report highlights the importance of life skills for individuals and societies, and argues that they are essential for success in the 21st century workplace. The university environment provides students with many opportunities to learn and grow, both academically and personally (Council of Europe, 2018). However, there are also a number of factors that can shape students' development of life skills, both positively and negatively. One of these factors is academic engagement (Erduran Avcı & Korur, 2022; Erduran Avcı & Selçuk, 2021). Students who are more engaged in their academic studies are more likely to develop strong life skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication. This is because academic engagement requires students to use these skills in order to succeed in their studies. Another key factor that shapes university students' life skills is extracurricular activities (Köksal & Yakar, 2021; Eranil, 2023). Extracurricular activities, such as clubs, sports, and volunteer work, can provide students with opportunities to develop life skills such as teamwork, leadership, and communication. Extracurricular activities can also help students to develop their social networks and make new friends. Social support from family, friends, and mentors is another important factor that shapes university students' life skills (Köksal & Yakar, 2021; Eranil, 2023). Social support can provide students with encouragement, guidance, and resources. Students with strong social support networks are more likely to be successful in their academic studies and in developing their life skills. Personal resilience is also an important factor that shapes university students' life skills (Köksal & Yakar, 2021; Eranil, 2023). Personal resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity. Students with high personal resilience are more likely to be able to cope with stress and challenges, and to persevere in the face of setbacks. Yuen (2011) examined the US and Hong Kong literature to understand the development of attachment and life skills in young people, and found that attachment, self-enhancement, cognitive development and life skills development are interconnected. Achieving attachment is associated with individuals' social skills and perspective-taking skills. He also emphasized that well-designed programs positively affect skills. Such programs emphasize collaboration and partnership among all teachers, administrators, and counselling staff to implement school guidance strategies, focus on preserving values, articulate expectations, and build capacity to care for students.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Research in the International Context

Three systematic reviews offer valuable insights into the effectiveness and implications of life skills programs, addressing different aspects of life skills education. Nasheeda et al. (2019) conducted a systematic review that assessed the global effectiveness of life skills programs, highlighting disparities between developed and developing countries. While developed countries tend to implement systematic programs with extensive research, many developing nations lack comprehensive life skills education. Despite these disparities, the review underscores the promise of life skills education in promoting positive behaviors among adolescents but emphasizes the need for further research, particularly in understanding the practical application of these skills in daily life. Kirchhoff and Keller (2021) systematically reviewed school-based life skills programs targeting various age groups, revealing that the focus shifts during adolescence from behavioral-affective skills to a broader set of life skills. The review emphasized the importance of fostering health-related self-regulation, informed decision-making, and building supportive relationships during adolescence, particularly through critical thinking. Formal education can significantly contribute to promoting life skills when embedded in an environment that allows practice and reflection. Finally, Kauts and Saini (2022) underscored the importance of relevant life skills interventions in improving adolescents' self-concept. They highlighted the need for diverse training modules to cater to the requirements of 21st-century adolescents and facilitate their personal development. The review emphasized that life skills education provides valuable knowledge, skills, and values that support a healthy transition to adulthood. The contextual understanding of how adolescents from different cultural backgrounds incorporate life skills into their lives is essential for comprehensive life skills education. These reviews collectively stress the significance of life skills education in adolescents' lives and the potential for further research and development in this field.

The studies conducted by Sun Lee and Chen (2017), Savoji and Ganji (2013), Joshi et al. (2022), and Zaman et al. (2023) shed light on various aspects of life skills development, encompassing cultural, technological, and educational perspectives. Sun Lee and Chen (2017) delved into the factors influencing university students' networking skills and found that cultural capital significantly shapes these skills. Exposure to diverse cultural genres from an early age equips individuals with the cultural knowledge and attitude necessary for effective networking. Digital competency, particularly through active participation in digital cultural production, is positively linked to enhanced networking skills. Regular engagement in digital cultural production fosters interaction with other users and promotes the development of connection-building skills. Savoji and Ganji (2013) emphasized the positive impact of life skills training (LST) programs on students' mental health, particularly those with better self-esteem and fewer interpersonal and intrapersonal problems. The study highlighted that LST programs reduced the burden of stressful life events on students. It also noted that these programs were more effective for females, potentially due to social modeling effects. Joshi et al. (2022) investigated the effects of an enrichment program on the core life skills of undergraduate students. Their findings indicated a significant improvement in students' life skills after the intervention. Prior to the program, all students had low levels of life skills, but post-intervention evaluations revealed that many reached average and high levels. Importantly, the program had a positive impact on the life skills of both male and female students, with no significant gender differences. Zaman et al. (2023) underscored the importance of focusing on the development of life skills among undergraduates, highlighting the influential role of family in shaping these skills. The study revealed that students varied in their proficiency across different life skills, with some being highly proficient in areas like interpersonal relationships and creative thinking, while others struggled in skills like self-awareness and coping with stress. Family was identified as the most influential source of learning life skills, particularly in areas such as self-awareness, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, decision-making, and creative thinking. This highlights the traditional belief system regarding the acquisition of life skills, with family playing a primary role.

In the context of life skills development in higher education, Sun Lee and Chen (2017) provided insights into factors influencing university students' networking skills. They emphasized that cultural capital significantly shapes networking skills. Exposure to various cultural genres from an early age equips individuals with the cultural knowledge and attitude necessary for effective networking. Digital competency, particularly through active participation in digital cultural production, was positively linked to enhanced networking skills. This aspect underscores the importance of cultural and technological factors in shaping students' networking and communication abilities. Cronin et al. (2021) emphasized the moderately high perception of life skills among students, with teamwork, interpersonal communication, social skills, problem-solving, and decision-making ranking the highest. They stressed the importance of tracking changes in students' life skills over time and assessing the long-term impact of these skills. Väisänen and Hirsto (2020) investigated the development of working life skills in university students, emphasizing both generic and field-specific skills, including collaboration, communication, information literacy, and career-related skills. They found that the flipped classroom approach played a crucial role in promoting active student engagement and cooperative learning. Nair and Fahimirad (2019) highlighted the impact of life skills programs on students' personal efficacy and competencies, supporting the social cognitive theory and reinforcing the importance of integrating life skills courses into higher education curricula. Alajmi (2019) explored the use of e-portfolios in enhancing student teachers' life skills, showing significant improvements in problem-solving, decision-making, and collaboration skills. Sun Lee and Chen (2017) focused on the influence of cultural and technological aspects on university students' networking skills. They found that cultural capital significantly influenced networking skills and that digital competency, especially through digital cultural production, positively impacted networking skills. Savoji and Ganji (2013) explored the effectiveness of a life skills training program, noting that it was more effective for females than males. Gender differences and social modeling played a role in life skills learning in these studies. Savoji and Ganji's study (2013) highlights the role of self-perception and coping skills in mental health. Importantly, it notes that life skills training was more effective for females than males, likely due to the influence of female instructors, indicating the impact of social modeling on life skills learning. These studies emphasize the importance of life skills development in higher education and suggest various strategies and approaches to promote these skills.

Cronin et al. (2021) revealed a positive association between individual life skills and psychological well-being, academic self-efficacy, and health-related quality of life. Maddah et al. (2019) highlighted the role of life skills programs in enhancing the well-being of university students, with specific improvements in self-care, career planning, and healthy eating habits. Zaman et al.'s (2023) research emphasizes the significance of life skills, particularly in the context of well-being among undergraduates. The study shows that students perceive themselves as proficient in some life skills while struggling in areas like self-awareness, coping with stress, and effective communication. Notably, the family plays a crucial role in shaping students' life skills. This underscores the role of family as a traditional and influential source for life skills learning, especially in areas like self-awareness, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, and decision-making. Moshki et al. (2014) found that life skills training can enhance interactive decision-making, problem-solving, critical thinking, and stress management skills, ultimately reducing the tendency toward drug abuse. Raudebaugh et al. (2022) noted the challenges faced by occupational therapy assistant students due to difficulties with life skills, potentially affecting their success in academic and practicum settings. These studies underscore the potential of life skills programs to foster individual growth, mental health, and effective decision-making. The study by Joshi et al. (2022) found significant improvements in all aspects of life skills following the LST intervention, suggesting that well-designed programs can effectively promote life skills among students, irrespective of gender.

These studies reviewed above emphasize the roles of cultural, social, and technological factors in shaping students' abilities. They also underscore the effectiveness of specific programs and interventions in enhancing life skills and well-being among students in higher education. They highlight the importance of life skills in various educational and personal contexts, promoting overall well-being and personal growth, and emphasize the need for tailored approaches to teach and enhance life skills, showcasing the potential benefits of such programs in higher education and beyond.

### **Research in the Turkish context**

Regarding life skills education, several studies offer valuable insights into the perceptions and development of these skills among different populations. Erduran Avcı and Selçuk (2021) reported that faculty members generally believe that teacher candidates acquire life skills during their education, with various factors influencing these views, such as course practicality, content, duration, and class size. They emphasized the importance of extracurricular activities in developing life skills. Yayla-Eskici and Özsevgeç (2019) conducted a meta-synthesis, highlighting the dearth of comprehensive life skills studies, particularly in the context of daily life challenges. The synthesis revealed variations in the emphasis on life skills between Turkish and international literature, calling for standardized curricula to ensure effective skills development. Ustabulut (2021) focused on Turkish teacher candidates, finding that they possess diverse life skills but noting variations based on factors like age, GPA, and gender. Külekçi Akyavuz and Karakaş (2020) reported high life skills levels among teacher candidates, while Zorlu, Zorlu, and Dinç (2019) found moderate levels. In contrast, Erduran Avcı and Kamer (2018) observed low life skills awareness among teachers. Erduran-Avcı and Korur (2022) delved into the relationship between adolescents' life skills and factors such as gender, grade level, academic performance, and socio-economic status, revealing variations in different life skills dimensions. Eranıl (2023) evaluated preservice teachers' life skills, with punctuality, problem-solving abilities, and openness to criticism correlating with higher life skills. Finally, Ünal (2019) found that university students with low family income levels exhibit higher life skills, while those with low interaction anxiety tend to excel in these skills.

Erduran Avcı and Selçuk (2021) found that most faculty members believe teacher candidates develop or partially develop life skills during their four years in the faculty of education, with fewer considering such development insufficient. Factors affecting these views include the practicality of courses, course content, duration, and class size. Faculty members note that extracurricular activities significantly contribute to skills like communication, decision-making, and creative thinking. However, several factors, including class size, environmental conditions, educational policies, cultural values, and educators' qualifications, are seen as hindrances to effective life skills education in the faculty of education.

Yayla-Eskici and Özsevgeç's 2019 meta-synthesis of studies on life skills present several key findings: They highlight a lack of comprehensive studies on life skills, particularly those designed to help individuals cope with daily life challenges. This limited research within the realm of education, despite efforts in areas like special education and health, has led to a lack of clarity surrounding the concept of life skills. The synthesis reveals that in studies conducted in Türkiye, communication, problem solving, leadership, teamwork, cooperation, empathy, critical thinking, and decision-making skills are the most frequently discussed life skills. In contrast, international literature tends to emphasize communication, leadership, problem solving, and decision-making skills. Given the disparities in the national and international literature, it is suggested that life skills-related sections of educational curricula should be standardized to ensure quality education and sustainable development. The perception of life skills should not be rigid but should adapt to different educational contexts. The use of portfolios has been noted to have a positive impact on life skills such as problem-solving, creative

thinking, decision-making, research, and inquiry. Furthermore, life skills curricula tailored to specific developmental periods have been observed to positively affect students' social skills and behaviors. These should be comprehensive and involve close collaboration with parents. High self-esteem is linked to increased participation in social life and more accurate utilization of life skills. This suggests that self-esteem is a significant factor influencing the application of life skills. The results obtained from studies involving diverse skills within the same developmental period might lead to varying sub-dimensions and ongoing uncertainty in future research. Yayla-Eskici and Özsevgeç (2019) underscore the need for standardized educational approaches to promote these skills effectively.

According to Ustabulut (2021), Turkish teacher candidates state that they sometimes consider themselves sufficient and sometimes inadequate in their ability to cope with emotions and stress. Turkish teacher candidates stated that they were undecided about ways to cope with stress, using stress positively for their work, coping with negative emotions, working within a plan to prevent work stress, using humor in the face of stress, and giving up the sense of perfectionism that would increase stress. Turkish teacher candidates show that they can empathize with individuals, have high self-awareness skills, realize what they can achieve, focus on their interests, put themselves in the shoes of the individual in front of them, develop a conscious awareness of their emotions, take risks to cope with the problem, and think of different alternatives for activities they do not like to do. they expressed. Turkish teacher candidates stated that they have a sense of responsibility, that they can predict the consequences of the decisions they make, that they can decide on the speaking tools they can use while speaking, and that they can implement the steps of problem-solving plans. Pre-service teachers stated that they could show sensitivity to problems, identify the causes of problems, establish a cause-effect relationship between events, and produce analytical solutions to events. Turkish teacher candidates stated that they could wait their turn to speak in order not to disrupt the communication environment, that they could tolerate the person they were talking to during the conversation, and that they could act in accordance with their personal communication skills. Turkish teacher candidates state that they have life skills and can use these skills in daily life. There is a significant relationship between Turkish teacher candidates' views on life skills and their grade point averages. Teacher candidates whose grade point average is at a medium level do not reflect their negative feelings to those around them. Teacher candidates with high grade point averages stated that they can work within a plan to get rid of stress, have a conscious awareness of their emotions, make decisions together with their group of friends, use the most appropriate communication tool for the other person during a conversation, apply the steps of problem solving, show sensitivity to problems, explain why between events. They stated that they were able to establish a relationship with results. There is a significant relationship between Turkish teacher candidates' views on life skills and their ages. Turkish teacher candidates between the ages of 18-19 stated that they could cope with stress and emotions. Teacher candidates aged 22 and over stated that they could take responsibility at the time of decision and make decisions as a group. Turkish teacher candidates between the ages of 22 and 23 stated that they could take risks to cope with the problem. There is a significant relationship between Turkish teacher candidates' views on life skills and their grade levels. 2nd grade Turkish teacher candidates stated that they could predict the consequences of the decisions they would make on a subject and establish a cause-effect relationship between events. 4th grade teacher candidates state that they are sensitive to the results. There is no significant relationship between Turkish teacher candidates' views on life skills and the time they spend on the internet.

Külekçi Akyavuz and Karakaş (2020) found the life skills levels of teacher candidates to be high. Zorlu, Zorlu and Dinç (2019) revealed that the life skills of teacher candidates were at a medium level. Likewise, Erduran Avcı and Kamer (2018) found that teachers' life skills awareness levels were low. There is a significant relationship between Turkish teacher

candidates' views on life skills and their gender. Male teacher candidates stated that they do not reflect their negative emotions to the environment and that they appear positive towards the environment. Female teacher candidates, on the other hand, stated that they can empathize with their environment, that they know well which means of communication they can use to communicate with people, and that they wait their turn during communication.

Erduran-Avcı and Korur (2022) examined the relationship between adolescents' life skills (LS) and various factors, including gender, grade level, science/physics course scores, GPA, and socio-economic status, by developing a scale for measurement. The study found that students scored highest in empathy, self-awareness, and self-esteem, while they scored the lowest in teamwork, coping with stress and emotions, and critical thinking. Significant relationships were identified between LS sub-dimensions and variables such as GPA, grade level, gender, and science/physics course scores. Notably, academically successful students displayed higher proficiency in most LS sub-dimensions, indicating a link between academic performance and life skills among adolescents. Eranlı (2023) found that the life skills level of preservice teachers averaged 3.51 out of 5, with higher levels of problem-solving abilities, openness to criticism, and punctuality associated with significantly higher life skills among the preservice teachers. Ünal (2019) concluded that the life skills levels of university students with low family income levels are higher than students with medium family income levels, and that students with low interaction anxiety are better in life skills than those with high interaction anxiety.

## **Purpose of the Research**

Aiming to fill an existing gap in the literature, this study aims to answer to the following research question:

- What are the positive and negative factors that shape university students' development of life skills?

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study aims to investigate the life skills development of university students. Descriptive research methodology was used in this study, which was designed as a survey. In order to collect the data, two questions were asked to the participants. 176 university students studying in two different cities of Türkiye and in different departments and year level answered the questions of "What are the factors that have had a positive impact on your personal growth?" and "What are the factors that have a negative impact on your acquisition of some life skills?" which was distributed as a printed form by the researcher, and filled out by the participants in person.

### **Setting and Participants**

The study group of the research consisted of 178 university students (91 males, 85 females) studying in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year of five different faculties and a vocational school from Uludağ University and Kastamonu University. They volunteered and expressed their consent verbally to participate in the study and were reached by convenience sampling method.

### **Instrument**

A printed form with two questions, "What are the factors that have had a positive impact on your personal growth?" and

“What are the factors that have a negative impact on your acquisition of some life skills?” was used as the data collection tool.

## Data Analysis

The data were collected in the 2019-2020 Fall semester on the campuses of Uludağ and Kastamonu universities. Since the data, i.e. dependent variables (opinions) are not continuous, Kruskal Wallis H test and Mann Whitney U non parametric tests were performed. In order to find out between which groups there was a difference, Dunnett's C, which is included in the equal variance not assumed in the post hoc test, was used.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained in the research are presented in the following tables.

**Table 1.** Demographic information of the participants

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	
Gender	Female	Male								
	n	87	49,4						176	
	%	89	50,6						100	
Age	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	-	
	n	34	55	39	25	16	2	1	4	96
	%	19,3	31,3	22,2	14,2	9,1	1,1	0,6	2,3	100
Year of study	First year	Second Year	Third Year	Fourth Year					-	
	n	93	43	13	27				176	
	%	52,8	24,4	7,4	15,3				100	
Faculty	Faculty of Education	Faculty of Sciences and Literature	Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	Vocational School	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	Faculty of Health Sciences			-	
	n	8	4	117	33	9	5		176	
	%	4,5	2,3	66,5	18,8	5,1	2,8		100	

Upon examining Table 1, in terms of gender, it is observed that 89 individuals (50.6%) are female, while 87 individuals (49.4%) are male. Their ages range from 19 to 26, with the most substantial cohort (31.3%) falling within the 20-year age group, and the smallest cohort (0.6%) comprising 25-year-olds. In relation to their seniority, 93 of the participants (52.8%) are enrolled in the first year, 43 individuals (24.4%) in the second year, 13 individuals (7.4%) in the third year, and 27 individuals (15.3%) in the fourth year. Regarding their faculty affiliation, 8 (4.5%) are registered in the Faculty of Education, 4 (2.3%) in the Faculty of Sciences and Literature, 117 (66.5%) in the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, 33 (18.8%) in the Vocational School, 9 (5.1%) in the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, and 5 participants (2.8%) in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

The opinions and distributions regarding the factors contributing positively to the progress of the participants are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Views on the Factors Contributing Positively to the Progress of the Participants

Opinions	f	%
My family	39	22,2

Learning to read Qur'an at the local mosque	24	13,6
Reading books	22	12,5
Supplementary medicines	20	11,4
My personal efforts	14	8,0
My social network	13	7,4
My social activities and hobbies	10	5,7
My teacher	9	5,1
Unanswered	7	4,0
My classes at school	5	2,8
My work/internship experiences	5	2,8
My friends	4	2,3
Social media	4	2,3
<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Table 2 presents the opinions and distributions regarding the factors that participants believe have positively contributed to their progress. According to the participants' views, the most significant contributions came from their families (22.2%) and learning to read the Qur'an at the local mosque (13.6%). Additionally, reading books (12.5%) and the use of supplementary medicines (11.4%) were seen as effective factors in their progress. Participants also believed that their personal efforts (8.0%) and their social networks (7.4%) played significant roles. Social activities and hobbies (5.7%), their teachers (5.1%), and their school classes (2.8%) were also considered contributing factors. However, some participants left this question unanswered (4.0%). Moreover, work or internship experiences (2.8%), friends (2.3%), and social media (2.3%) were also identified as contributing factors.

According to the participants' views, opinions on the factors hindering them from acquiring specific life skills are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Factors hindering the acquisition of specific life skills

Opinions	f	%
There's nothing negative	51	29
Unanswered	25	14,2
Schools were exam-oriented, focused on memorizing knowledge, and did not contribute to life	23	13,1
The culture and attitudes where I live prevented me from developing myself	16	9,1
Some have had a good impact, some a bad impact	16	9,1
My family did not encourage me to acquire life skills, on the contrary, they used hurtful language	11	6,3
I spent too much time on social media	11	6,3
Negative experience has expanded my thinking capacity and enabled me to look at things from different perspectives	8	4,5
There were no extracurricular activities or an environment that enhanced my personal development	6	3,4
I had financial problems	3	1,7
My family and social circle only talked about moral issues but did not set an example.	2	1,1
Inadequacies and shortcomings of my teachers	2	1,1
My family always told me to study and did not encourage me to participate in social life	1	0,6
I had health problems	1	0,6
<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Table 3 provides a summary of the opinions shared by the participants regarding the factors that hinder them from acquiring specific life skills. Notably, 29% of the participants expressed the view that there were no negative factors obstructing their acquisition of these skills. However, a significant portion, constituting 13.1%, felt that schools were predominantly exam-oriented, focused on rote memorization, and failed to contribute to life skills. In addition, 9.1% of

the participants believed that the culture and attitudes within their living environment acted as barriers to their personal development, while another 9.1% acknowledged a mix of both positive and negative influences. On the other end of the spectrum, there were some less prevalent opinions. Only 0.6% of participants cited their family's constant emphasis on academic study, coupled with a lack of encouragement to participate in social life. An equally small percentage, 0.6%, mentioned health problems as a hindrance to acquiring life skills. Slightly more, at 1.1%, believed their families and social circles primarily discussed moral issues but did not set a practical example.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test, which assesses the differences in participants' opinions across faculties, are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test for Differences in Opinions across Faculties

	Faculty	N	Mean Rank	H	df	p
What are the factors that have had a positive impact or contribution to your progress?	Faculty of Education	8	116,94	4.290	5	0.508
	Faculty of Sciences and Literature	4	77,63			
	Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	117	86,38			
	Vocational School	33	92,32			
	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	9	94,44			
	Faculty of Health Sciences	5	65,40			
	Total	176				

When looking at Table 4, it is evident that there is no difference in opinion distribution across faculties regarding participants' views on the factors contributing positively to their progress. Therefore, participants' opinions on the factors contributing to their progress do not vary across faculties.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test, which assesses the differences in participants' opinions across faculties, are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test for Differences in Opinions across Faculties

	Faculty	N	Mean Rank	H	df	p	Difference
What are the factors that have contributed to your inability to acquire certain life skills?	Faculty of Education	8	42,38	20,351	5	0.001*	Faculty of Education - Vocational School
	Faculty of Sciences and Literature	4	34,13				
	Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	117	98,07				Faculty of Education - Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences
	Vocational School	33	83,42				
	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	9	69,33				Faculty of Sciences and Literature - Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences
	Faculty of Health Sciences	5	49,90				
Total	176		Faculty of Sciences and Literature - Vocational School				

\*p<0.05

When examining the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test for whether there is a difference in participants' opinions regarding the factors hindering the acquisition of specific life skills across faculties, a significant difference is observed. This difference exists between the Faculty of Education and the Vocational School, Faculty of Education and Faculty of

Economics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Sciences and Literature and Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, as well as between the Faculty of Sciences and Literature and the Vocational School.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test, which assesses the differences in participants' opinions across class levels, are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test for Differences in Opinions across Class Levels

	Grade	N	Mean Rank	H	df	p
What are the factors that have had a positive impact or contribution to your progress?	First	93	89,15	0.452	3	0.929
	Second	43	85,43			
	Third	13	95,77			
	Fourth	27	87,65			
	Total	176				

Looking at Table 6, it is evident that there is no difference in opinion distribution across class levels regarding participants' views on the factors contributing positively to their progress. Therefore, participants' opinions on the factors contributing to their progress do not vary across class levels. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test, which assesses the differences in participants' opinions across class levels, are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test for Differences in Opinions across Class Levels

	Grade	N	Mean Rank	H	df	p
What are the factors that have contributed to your inability to acquire certain life skills?	First	93	91,82	5.638	3	0.131
	Second	43	88,85			
	Third	13	103,77			
	Fourth	27	69,15			
	Total	176				

When examining the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test for whether there is a difference in participants' opinions regarding the factors hindering the acquisition of specific life skills across class levels, there is no significant difference.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U Test, which assesses the differences in participants' opinions based on gender, are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Results of the Mann-Whitney U Test for Differences in Opinions Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	p
Female	87	87,53	7615,50	3787,500	-0,251	0,802
Male	89	89,44	7960,50			
Total	176					

When looking at Table 8, it is evident that there is no difference in opinion distribution based on gender regarding participants' views on the factors contributing positively to their progress. Therefore, the opinions of female and male

participants on the factors contributing to their progress remain unchanged.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U Test, which assesses the differences in participants' opinions based on gender, are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Results of the Mann-Whitney U Test for Differences in Opinions Based on Gender.

Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	p
Female	87	70,18	6106,00			
Male	89	106,40	9470,00	2278,000	-4,791	0,00*
Total	176					

\*p<0.05

Examining the Mann-Whitney U Test results for whether there is a difference in participants' opinions regarding the factors hindering the acquisition of specific life skills based on gender, we can observe a significant difference between male and female students.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Life skills are essential for success in Turkish higher education. The Turkish government has recognized the importance of life skills and has incorporated them into the national curriculum. However, there is still a need to do more to support the development of life skills in higher education institutions. Higher education institutions in Türkiye have a responsibility to support the development of life skills in their students. This can be done by offering life skills courses, incorporating life skills into existing courses, and providing students with opportunities to develop their life skills through extracurricular activities and social support.

### Suggestions for Further Research

Further longitudinal studies may track the development of life skills in university students over an extended period, allowing researchers to assess changes and trends in life skills development. Also, further research may compare the life skills development of students in different faculties or departments to identify potential discipline-specific variations and tailor interventions accordingly. Researchers may also conduct comparative analyses to explore how cultural and societal factors impact the acquisition and development of life skills among university students and assess whether there are cultural differences in the reported factors and their influence on academic performance.

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