

Skills Development among College Students through Collection and Donation Drives: A Case Study of an Urban Private College Outreach Program

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Abstract: *This study examines skill development in college students through community-focused donation drives. Using a case study of an Indian urban private college, the research analyzes how participating in the collection and distribution of items fosters personal and professional growth. Results from 121 undergraduate participants indicate significant improvements in communication, teamwork, and social empathy. The findings are mapped against Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, suggesting that these low-cost initiatives are high-impact tools for enhancing employability and civic responsibility. The article concludes by recommending the institutionalization of community outreach in higher education to achieve holistic student development.*

Keywords: *skill development*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, higher education is no longer limited to theoretical knowledge acquisition and classroom instruction. Colleges and universities are increasingly required to equip students with life skills, employability competencies, and a feeling of civic duty in addition to subjective knowledge. Initiatives for community engagement and service-learning are among the best approaches to accomplish this goal.

Collection and distribution of old clothes, toys, and food items are popular forms of donation drives for social engagement among students. While such drives primarily aim to support underprivileged communities, they simultaneously serve as experiential learning opportunities where students develop critical skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and empathy.

This paper presents a case study of an urban private college in Mumbai that conducts donation drives in and around the college locality for orphans and underprivileged children. The study examines the range of skills students developed through participation in different drives, supported by a review of existing literature and theories of experiential learning. It highlights the importance of integrating social work into higher education curricula to prepare students as responsible citizens and competent professionals.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study, which focuses on an urban private college, uses a quantitative and qualitative case study design. The case demonstrates how the institution collaborated with an NGO to hold donation drives in the campus area, which aids in students' development of various life skills.

Participants

Participants included 121 undergraduate students from different disciplines, who volunteered for the program. Faculty coordinators and NGO staff also contributed to organizing the drives.



Data Collection

Observation of student activity during the donation drives was one method used to gather data. Structured questionnaires (Google Forms).

III. RESULTS AND OBSERVATION

The participant demographic was primarily female (77 students) in the 18-20 age group belonging to second year of graduation (Table No.1 and Fig. No. 1). Most Students showed that moderate skill development is achieved by students from all the types of skills except leadership skills and problem-solving skills, where skills were developed slightly and significantly respectively. (Table No. 2 and Fig. No. 2). Maximum participation was observed from commerce stream and mainly students have participated in donation drives once, which may be the reason students achieved moderate type of skills from donation drives. Around 72% of students participated in donation drives . (Table No. 3 and Fig. No. 3). Maximum students responded that they were involved in collecting the materials for donation drives and least in fund raising . (Table No. 4 and Fig. No. 4). Maximum students achieved practical learning experience during donation drive and participated due to personal interest (Table No. 5 and Fig. No. 5). Max students accepted that good overall experience and also except that it has increased their interest in community services (Table No. 6 and Fig. No. 6). Most students agreed that they faced lack of time as major challenge during donation drives . (Table No. 7 and Fig. No. 7). One of the most unfortunate message from students was that they will not recommend other students to participate in donation drives, which may be due to lack of time and time consumption for collecting the donation materials . (Table No. 8 and Fig. No. 8).

Table No.: 1. Table showing gender, age group and academic year record.

| Gender | | age group | | | | Academic Year | | | |
|--------|--------|-----------|-------|-------|----------|---------------|--------|-------|---------------|
| Male | female | Below 18 | 18-20 | 21-23 | above 23 | First | Second | Third | Post Graduate |
| 44 | 77 | 10 | 102 | 6 | 3 | 47 | 69 | 3 | 2 |

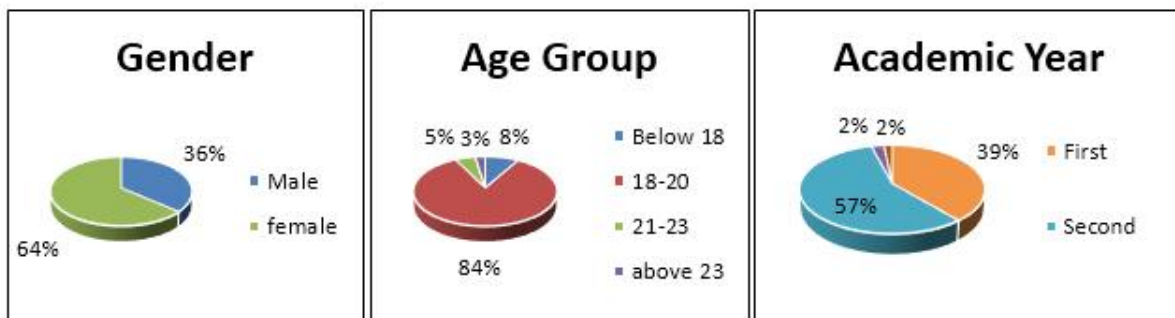


Fig. No.1. Pie chart showing gender, age group and academic year record.

Table No. 2. Table showing responses for types of skill among students in donation drive.

| Types of skills | 1 = Not at all | 2 = Slightly | 3 = Moderately | 4 = Significantly | 5 = Highly |
|---------------------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-------------------|------------|
| Leadership Skills | 23 | 35 | 29 | 24 | 22 |
| Communication Skills | 11 | 29 | 43 | 32 | 22 |
| Teamwork and Collaboration | 12 | 23 | 39 | 30 | 31 |
| Time Management | 11 | 33 | 41 | 26 | 24 |
| Problem-Solving Ability | 13 | 30 | 32 | 39 | 22 |
| Event Planning and Coordination | 11 | 29 | 41 | 26 | 27 |



| | | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|
| Decision-Making | 14 | 22 | 46 | 27 | 25 |
| Social Responsibility and Empathy | 13 | 29 | 36 | 29 | 28 |
| Confidence and Public Handling | 14 | 26 | 40 | 27 | 29 |
| Record Keeping and Organizational Skills | 15 | 26 | 39 | 24 | 32 |

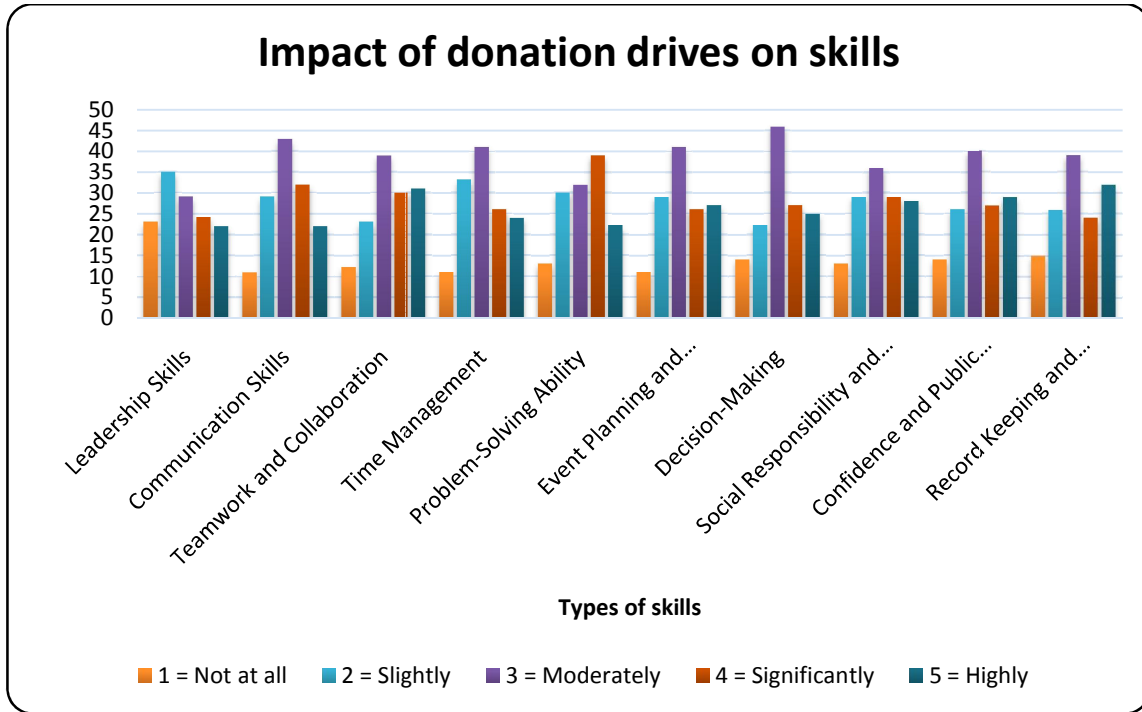


Fig. No.2: Graph showing responses for types of skill among students in donation drive.

Table No.:3. Table showing responses for stream and participation in donation drive.

| Stream/Discipline | | | Have you participated in any collection/donation drive organized by your college? | | If yes, how many times have you participated? | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------|---|----|---|-------------------|------|
| Science | Commerce | Other | Yes | No | 2-3 times | More than 3 times | Once |
| 49 | 71 | 1 | 80 | 31 | 22 | 3 | 96 |



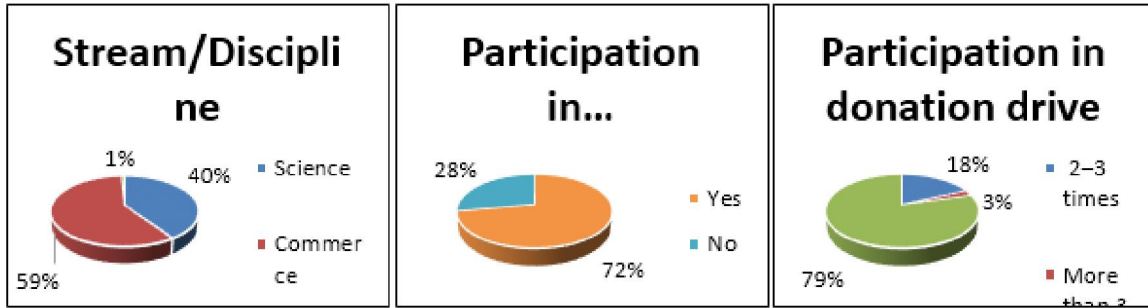


Fig. No.3: Pie chart showing responses for stream and participation in donation drive

Table no. 4: Table showing involvement of students in activities during donation drive.

| What kind of activities were you involved in? | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|--|---------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| Collecting materials (clothes, books, stationery, etc.) | Sorting and packaging | Coordinating with NGOs or beneficiaries | Managing publicity/awareness campaigns | Transportation and distribution | Fundraising | Record keeping/documentation | Other: _____ |
| 56 | 11 | 15 | 30 | 12 | 6 | 14 | 42 |

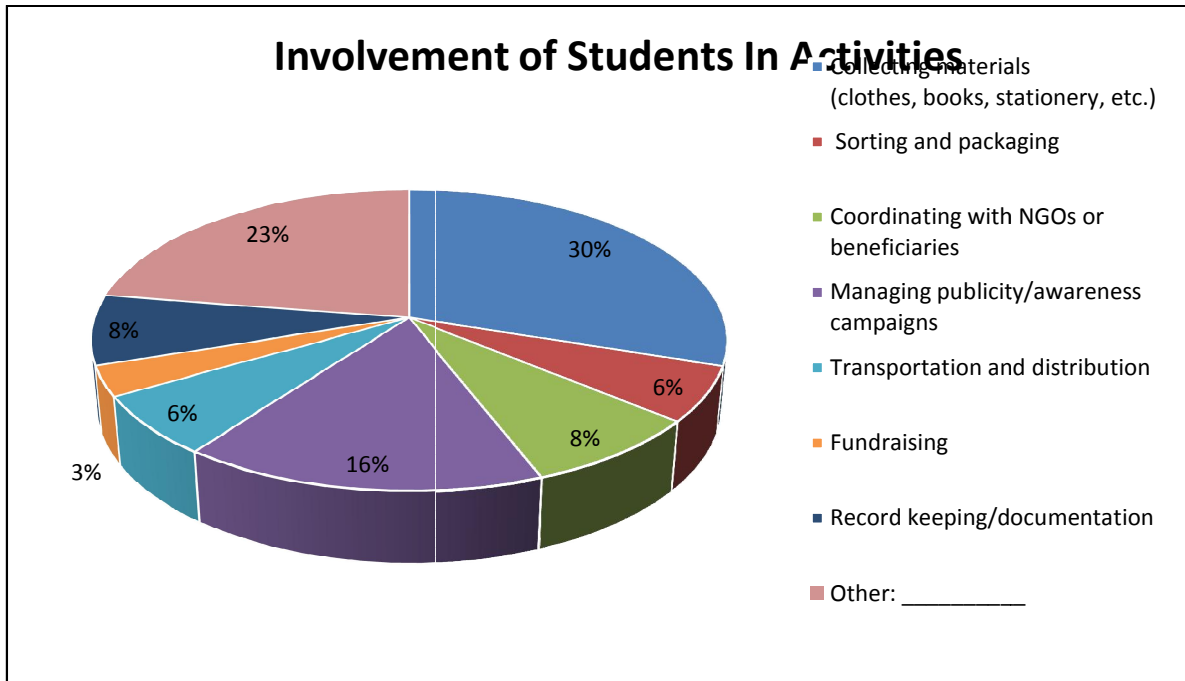


Fig. No. 4: Pie chart showing involvement of students in activities during donation drive.



Table No. 5: Table showing learning experiences and motivation for students during donation drive.

| Do you think donation drives provide practical learning experiences? | | | What motivated you to participate? | | | | | | |
|--|----|-------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| Yes | No | Maybe | Personal interest | Academic requirements | Peer influence | Faculty encouragement | Social responsibility | Certification or recognition | Other: _____ |
| 86 | 8 | 27 | 71 | 38 | 3 | 19 | 57 | 16 | 14 |

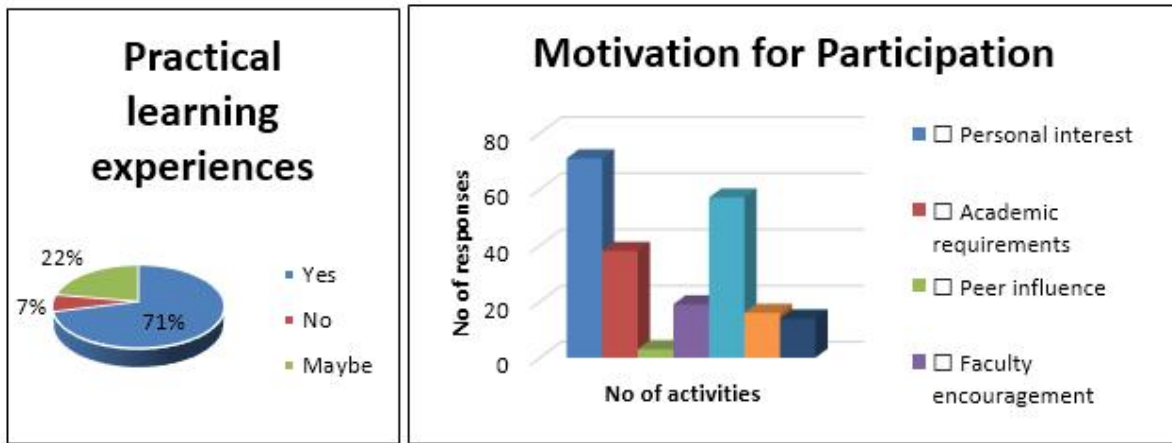


Fig. No.5: Pie chart and graph showing learning experiences and motivation for students during donation drive respectively.

Table No. 6: Table showing responses for overall learning experience and interest in such outreach activities.

| How would you rate your overall learning experience from the drives? | | | | | Did the outreach activities increase your interest in community service? | | |
|--|-----------|------|------------|------|--|----------------|-----|
| Average | Excellent | Good | No opinion | Poor | No | To some extent | Yes |
| 21 | 39 | 64 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 32 | 81 |



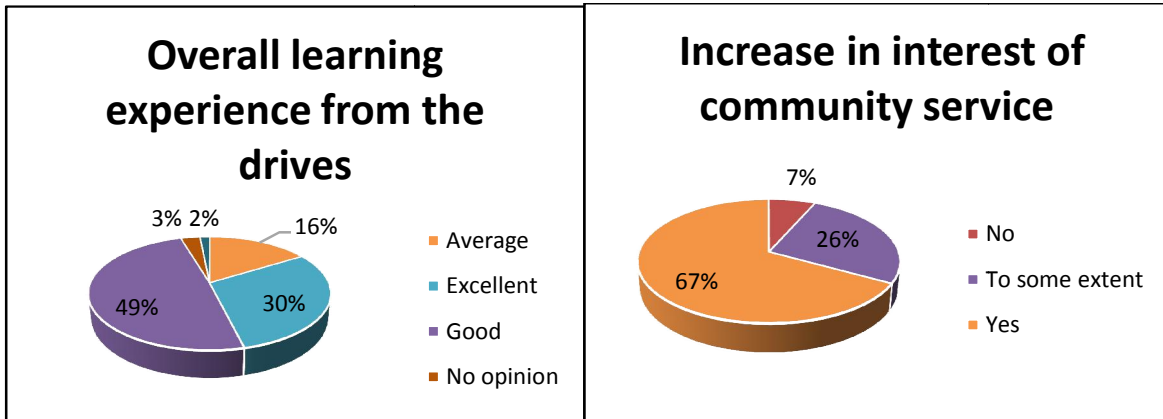


Fig. No.6: Pie chart showing responses for overall learning experience and interest in such outreach activities.

Table No. 7: Table showing challenges faced during the donation drives.

| What challenges did you face during the donation drives? | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Lack of time | Poor coordination | Insufficient resources | Lack of transportation | Limited support from peers/faculty | Communication barriers | No major challenges | Other: _____ |
| 52 | 18 | 19 | 16 | 14 | 24 | 30 | 19 |

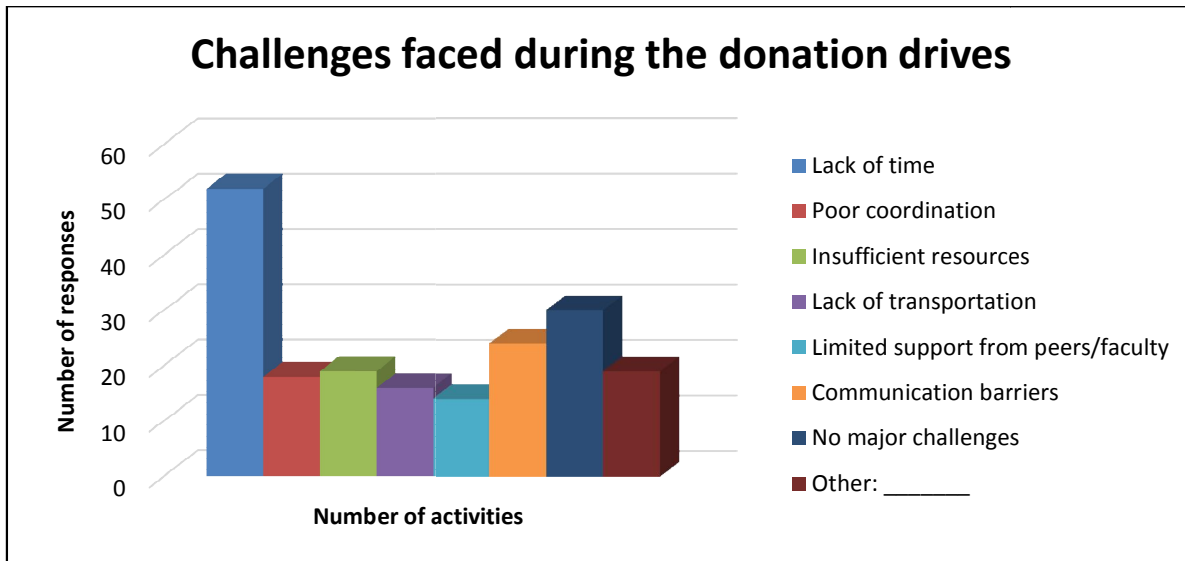


Fig. No.7: Graph showing challenges faced during the donation drives.

Table No. 8: Table showing recommendation for participation in donation drives to other students

| Would you recommend participation in donation drives to other students? | | |
|---|-----|----|
| Maybe | Yes | No |
| 29 | 10 | 82 |



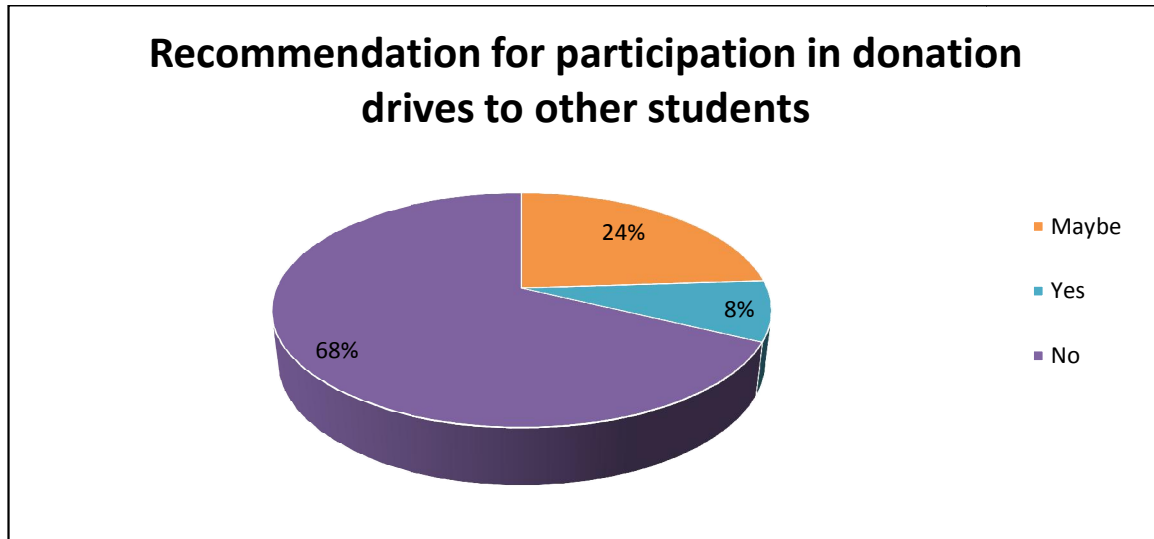


Fig. No.8: Pie chart showing recommendations for participation in donation drives to other students
The responses were categorized according to skill development domains (organizational skills, communication, leadership, teamwork, time management, empathy, and problem-solving) and subjected to thematic analysis (Qualitative data). Thematic analysis was carried out for qualitative questions.

What improvements would you suggest for future donation drives?

Any additional comments or reflections on the skills you developed.

Table No. 8: Thematic Coding and Major Themes Identified for showing improvements for future donation drives.

| Sr. No. | Codes Identified | Themes | Interpretation | Skills Identified |
|---------|--|---|--|--|
| 1. | Better planning and organization Proper arrangements Time management Coordination Make categories (clothes, hygiene, food) Clear goals and team roles Organization Do in perfection | Planning and Organizational Skills | Participants strongly emphasized the importance of systematic planning, structured organization, categorization of items, and effective time management. Coordination among team members was repeatedly highlighted. | Event Management & Organizational Skills |
| 2. | Awareness and outreach Promote awareness Good communication More communication and publicity Create slogans Use social media, posters, hashtags Community outreach | Communication and Outreach Skills | Effective communication strategies were seen as essential to increase participation and trust. Participants emphasized marketing, branding, and outreach efforts. | Communication, Promotion & Public Relations Skills |
| 3. | Encourage students Motivate students More active participation More population should participate I request all to participate | Leadership and Participation Mobilization | Responses show the need for motivational leadership and active engagement strategies to mobilize volunteers and donors. | Leadership & Community Mobilization Skills |



| | | | | |
|----|---|--|--|---|
| | Given by all Indian citizens Be active in the process | | | |
| 4. | Donate for help not for photos Social responsibility Remove poverty Promote development Help people Transparency Donations as per NGO requirements | Ethical and Social Responsibility Skills | Participants emphasized ethical conduct, genuine intention, and accountability. Transparency and need-based donations were important concerns. | Ethical Responsibility & Social Commitment Skills |
| 5. | Use technology QR codes Online forms Feedback surveys Leveraging technology Bring new ideas | Technological and Innovation Skills | Participants suggested adopting digital tools for better efficiency, donor engagement, and tracking impact. | Digital Literacy & Innovation Skills |
| 6. | Better funds Collecting clothes, food Donate helpful things School supplies Hygiene items Blood donation Categorization of items Education support | Resource Management Skills | There is emphasis on effective collection, categorization, and distribution of appropriate resources based on beneficiary needs. | Resource Planning & Allocation Skills |
| 7. | All good Good Nothing No improvement needed Everything is perfect None No suggestion | Satisfaction and Positive Feedback | A large number of respondents expressed satisfaction, indicating that participants perceived the donation drive as successful. | Effective Execution of Donation Drive Activities |



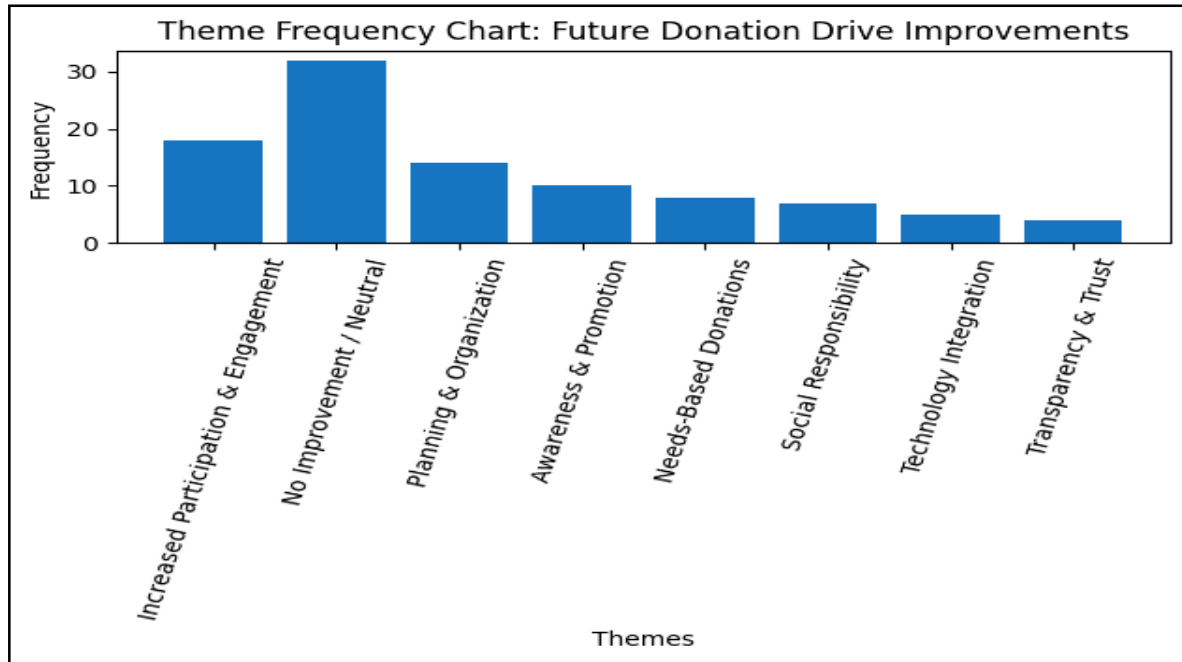


Fig. No. 8: Graph showing improvements for future donation drives.

Table No. 9: Thematic Coding and Major Themes Identified for any additional comments or reflections on the skills developed.

| Sr. No. | Codes Identified | Themes | Interpretation | Skills Identified |
|---------|---|---|--|---|
| 1. | “Communication” “Develop communication skills” “Improved communication” “Good communication” “Learned how to communicate effectively” | Communication Skill Development (Most Dominant Theme) with high frequency | Communication emerged as the most frequently reported skill developed. Students emphasized interpersonal interaction, persuasion (encouraging donations), and confidence in group contexts. | Improved communication |
| 2. | Coordination Teamwork Participation Leadership | Coordination and Teamwork with high frequency | Participants recognized collaborative competencies such as coordination, team functioning, and shared responsibility. This suggests experiential learning through group-based activity (e.g., donation drive). | Through organizing and participating strong teamwork was developed |
| 3. | Leadership Organizational skills Planning Advanced Planning and Tool Integration Tool use and actionability | Leadership and Organizational Skills with Moderate frequency | Some respondents demonstrated higher-order reflection, linking activity participation to planning, management, and execution capabilities. | Developed better communication, teamwork, and organizational skills |



| | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|---|
| 4. | Social responsibility Empathy Donation for need not sympathy Social awareness Government issue realization | Social Responsibility and Empathy with Moderate but Conceptually Significant frequency | These responses indicate affective domain development — civic sense, ethical awareness, and understanding societal needs. | It enhanced my social awareness and empathy — understanding real needs and making a genuine impact. |
| 5. | Problem-solving ability Adaptability Resilience | Problem-Solving and Adaptability with Low to Moderate frequency | Only a limited number of students explicitly articulated higher-order transferable skills such as adaptability and resilience. | Teamwork and Leadership, Problem-Solving and Adaptability, Resilience and Empathy was developed during the donation drive |
| 6. | “No” “Nothing” “None” “Not as such” “No comments” | Neutral / No Perceived Development with Very High | A substantial proportion of respondents did not perceive or articulate skill development. This may indicate: Low engagement Lack of guided reflection Superficial participation Survey fatigue | This theme is quantitatively dominant but qualitatively minimal |
| 7. | “Proper arrangements required” “Realization of government issue” | Need for Structural Improvement with low frequency | A few responses point toward systemic gaps or logistical improvements, suggesting constructive feedback. | Structural Improvement is required |

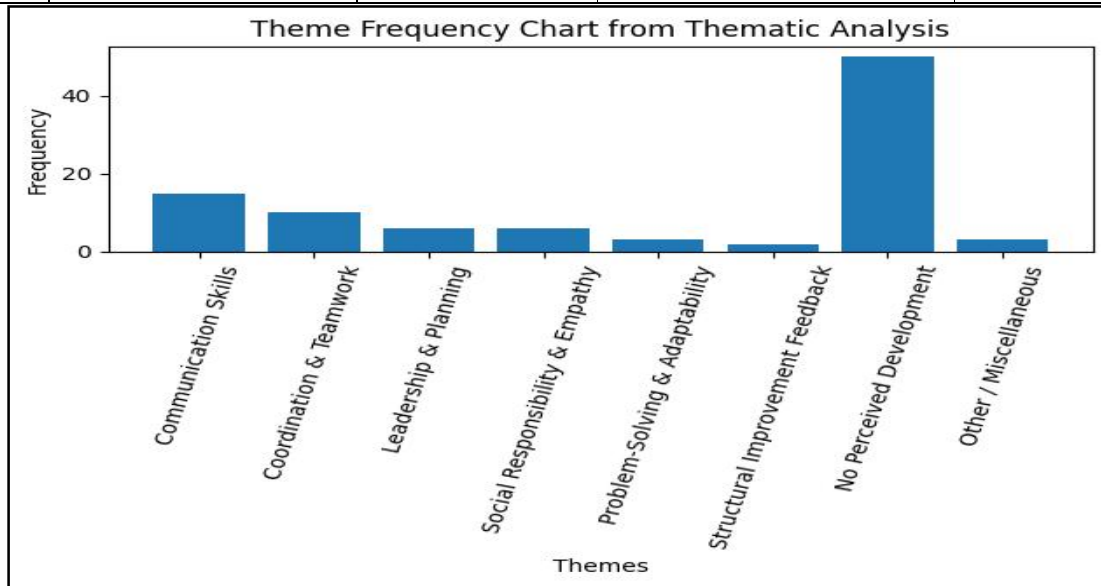


Fig. No.9: Graph showing any additional comments or reflections on the skills developed.



Thematic study suggests that donation drives necessitate a combination of administrative, leadership, communication, ethical, and technology abilities. The most prevalent skill area discovered was Planning and Organizational Skills, followed by Participation, Mobilization and Communication Skills. The high number of satisfaction replies indicates that the contribution campaign was mainly successful, though there is room for improvement

Discussion

Many students reported that this was their first experience of managing an event from start to finish. They learned to handle logistics, including transportation, storage, and inventory. Persuasive communication played a central role, as students had to encourage peers and community members to contribute. They carried the flyers to different classes, gave announcements, and used social media effectively. This built their confidence in public speaking and interpersonal interaction. Several students took on roles as team leaders, managing small groups responsible for different tasks. Leadership skills emerged as they delegated responsibilities, resolved conflicts, and motivated peers. Students highlighted that working in groups taught them the value of cooperation and respect for diverse perspectives. Balancing academic schedules with outreach work was a challenge. Students reported improved prioritization and time management skills after successfully meeting deadlines. Unexpected challenges—such as excess of some items and shortage of others, or difficulties in transporting donations—compelled students to develop quick decision-making abilities. Perhaps the most transformative outcome was the development of empathy. They expressed greater social responsibility and a desire to continue community service in the future. It involves a Sentiments of honour, devotion, and duty were developed by African-American students at Black colleges (Noah D. Drezner, 2009).

The outcomes align with the Kolb's experiential learning cycle, which involves four-stages of learning such as continuous loop of Concrete Experience (doing), Reflective Observation (reviewing), Abstract Conceptualization (learning/concluding), and Active Experimentation (planning/trying) which is the basis for experiential learning, where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb D. A., 1984). These skills helped people to survive during COVID-19 by doing work using their skill.

Benefits to the Society

Direct Support to Needy Individuals & Families, Promotes a Culture of Sharing and Social Responsibility, Strengthens Community Bonds, Increases Awareness about Social Issues, Encourages Inclusion and Dignity, Environmental and Sustainability Benefits, Role Modelling for Younger Students & Community, Support to NGOs and Community-Based Organisations, Building Social Capital, and Contribution to National Development Goals.

Findings

Skill Enhancement: Students developed critical employability skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving.

Civic Responsibility: Participation increased students' awareness of social inequalities and fostered empathy.

NGO Collaboration: Partnering with NGOs provided structure, resources, and credibility to the drives.

Challenges: Logistical issues such as storage, transportation, and coordination were key barriers.

Holistic Growth: The project contributed to students' personal growth, confidence, and sense of initiative.



SWOC Analysis/Limitations:

| Strengths | Weaknesses | Opportunities | Challenges |
|---|--|--|---|
| Holistic Skill Development High Social Relevance Low-Cost, High-Impact Activity Strong Community Linkages Alignment with NAAC / ISR / Extension Requirements Inclusiveness and Value Education | Irregular and Event-Based Nature Limited Formal Assessment of Skills Dependence on a Few Motivated Faculty/Students Possible Logistical Challenges Lack of Systematic Planning and Documentation | Irregular and Event-Based Nature Limited Formal Assessment of Skills Dependence on a Few Motivated Faculty/Students Possible Logistical Challenges Lack of Systematic Planning and Documentation | Ensuring Dignity and Non-Stigmatization of Beneficiaries Quality and Appropriateness of Donated Materials Safety, Security and Ethical Concerns |

Conclusion and Recommendations

This case study demonstrates that community outreach projects, such as donation drives, serve as powerful pedagogical tools for fostering critical life skills among students. Beyond the traditional academic curriculum, these initiatives provide a practical laboratory for students to cultivate real-world competencies in strategic planning, leadership, interpersonal communication, and social empathy. By bridging the gap between classroom theory and community practice, such programs significantly enhance student employability while instilling a deep-seated sense of civic and social responsibility.

To maximize the developmental impact of these outreach initiatives, the following recommendations are proposed:

Curricular and Institutional Integration: Higher education institutions should formally integrate community service into the academic framework. This can be achieved by making participation mandatory through established bodies like the National Service Scheme (NSS) or the National Cadet Corps (NCC), or by embedding service-learning modules directly into the departmental syllabus.

Strategic Multi-Sectoral Partnerships: Colleges should actively cultivate sustainable collaborations with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) wings, and local administrative bodies. These partnerships provide students with a more structured and professional environment for their outreach efforts.

Capacity Building and Faculty Mentorship: To ensure the efficacy of these drives, faculty coordinators should act as mentors, providing formal training in event management, logistics, and professional communication to prepare students for the complexities of field-based projects.

Incentivization and Formal Recognition: To sustain student motivation and engagement, institutions should introduce a system of formal recognition. This could include the awarding of academic credits, certificates of merit, or "Social Impact" awards that students can highlight in their professional portfolios.

Systematic Documentation and Advocacy: Finally, colleges must move toward a culture of data-driven reflection. Systematically documenting the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of outreach initiatives will facilitate evidence-based policy advocacy and allow for the successful replication of these models across other educational institutions.

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