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Life Skills of Adolescents in a Catholic University in Central Philippines

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Abstract. The 21st Century skills introduced diverse skills called life skills to go through the basics to navigate and deal with everyday demands of life. This study aimed to assess the life skills of adolescents in a Catholic University in Central Philippines in terms of self-awareness, effective communication, empathy, interpersonal relations, creative and critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, coping with emotions, and coping with stress. Similarly, it determined the relationship between the demographics and life skills. Using a quantitative design, a 100-item standardized questionnaire was responded by 268 adolescents enrolled in academic year 2022-2023. Generally, their level of life skills was rated average, which indicates that they have tendencies to regress depending on the severity of the situations or may progress further when they feel they have enough resources to respond in changes or difficulties of life. The lowest area was coping with stress and the highest area was self-awareness. Meanwhile, their sex, birth order, and family structure were found no relationship with life skills. Meaning, there might be other factors that may influence the life skills and may serve as directions for future researchers. Hence, continuous enhancement is essential to help the adolescents to reach their optimum level and maintain their life skills to deal with the life's challenges and demands.

Keywords. Life skills, adolescents, quantitative design, Catholic University in Central Philippines

Introduction

The 21st-century era has unfolded several life skills that can predict success (Tus, 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) pertains life skills as the ability to adapt and show positive behaviors that make individuals deal effectively with the challenges and demands of everyday life (Kishore, 2021). Life skills are increasingly mentioned as relevant skills adolescents should learn (Schurer, 2017). Adolescence is a transition period between childhood and adulthood that becomes a bridge between the two important life stages of human development. The transition can be a smooth process by imparting essential life skills to adolescents since it is considered a critical period that either fosters or hinders an individual's physical, psychological, sexual, and reproductive health (Mahanta et al., 2021). In a highly competitive world, it may heighten their stress levels and make them unsuccessful in dealing with this stage (Smith et al., 2018, as cited in

Mahanta et al., 2021). Therefore, it is vital to introduce life skills in the early stage of adolescence so that they will know the basics to navigate life stressors and cope with life's demands.

Life skills are a group of psychosocial and interpersonal competencies that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with and manage their lives healthily and productively. The WHO has identified ten life competencies or dimensions: self-awareness, empathy, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, creative thinking, critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, coping with emotions, and coping with stress (Saravanakumar, 2020). They prepare adolescents to face challenges, situations, or problems in life and provide holistic development for the health of adolescents and overall social development. These life skills enable adolescents to make positive and effective decisions (Sangma & Prakash, 2017), which is why a program that fully credits the life skills to enhance students' self-awareness skillset will be a big help. This design will aid students in discovering their unique attributes and intrinsic motivations in their development journey (Nair & Famihirad, 2019).

Mizell (2015) stated that the Philippines need urgency to make a significant and far-reaching reform in the education system. Schools are now challenged with more developments, including classroom engagement that supports the advancement of the life skills of students, especially adolescents, in which critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity are emphasized (Inocian, 2015).

The university where the researcher is connected also witnessed how junior high school students tap their life skills to cope with change. During counseling and follow-up sessions, these adolescents reported that they combat difficult transitions to online education, low academic performance, shortened attention span, and intentional absence in class because of wifi instability. They easily get bored and unmotivated, which prompted the academic coordinator, the adviser, and the guidance counselors to conduct home visitation (Macahilig, personal interview, 2022; Varquez, personal communication, 2022).

There are studies or literature about life skills which transpired in adolescents. However, the exploration in terms of dimensions has focused on only two or three life skills. Self-awareness and interpersonal relationship (Nair & Fahimirad, 2019); problem-solving, decision-making, and interpersonal relationship (Alajmi, 2019); critical and creative thinking (Weschler et al., 2018); and empathy, coping with stress and emotions (Dhingra & Chauhan, 2017), are cited often. Meanwhile, few local studies explored life skills concentrating on self-awareness, problem-solving, critical and creative thinking (Biscocho, 2021), communication, social, and cognitive skills (Honeyman et al., 2022). There is one which the researcher is fully aware of that maximizes the 10 dimensions of life skills (Pahilanga et al., 2023). The literature on life skills is scarce, especially in local settings, which the present study would like to fill as a new window of opportunities for adolescents.

Hence, the study aimed to assess the level of life skills of adolescents enrolled in a Catholic University in Central Philippines for the academic year 2022-2023. It also sought to determine the relationship between life skills and demographic variables, such as sex, family structure, and birth order. The findings of this study may serve as basis for a life skills enhancement program that can also be utilized in the guidance program for adolescents.

A. Framework of the Study

The study theorizes that the demographic variables of sex, birth order, and family structure influence the life skills of adolescents. This study is anchored on Social Cognitive Theory by Bandura (1986).

Human differentiation based on sex, birth order, and family structure can fundamentally affect people's daily lives. Role development and functioning often create conceptions constructed from certain mechanisms that operate how one behaves in his lifetime. The theory integrates the psychological and sociocultural determinants within a unified conceptual structure. Theoretically, the conceptions brought by sex, birth order, and family structure are the product of a broad network of social influences operating interdependently in various social subsystems. A person's behavior is not solely attributed to his self-development but rather brought by his adaptation to the social changes defined in his interaction and actions influenced by the environment (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

The Social Cognitive Theory popularized by Albert Bandura conceptualized the macro social applications rooted in the agentic perspective. This concept explains that a person is an agent who tries to influence intentionally his own functioning and life circumstances. In this regard, a person is not just a product of his life circumstances, like whether he is a male, the eldest in the family, or a product of a broken home. He is someone who produces his life circumstances. Out of the personal agency, he creates social systems structured in his gender roles, such as his ordinal position and others which influence him to develop himself, adapt to the environment, and change his ways (Bandura, 2012).

Further, in relation to the study, this theory discusses that humans experience changes, biological or physiological and social, in the environment that requires process of learning necessary to foster the level of life skills. These changes in the societal environment could lead the individuals to utilize cognitive skills, personal, and interpersonal skills to cope effectively with life. Simultaneously, other people also have expectations on how to cope with changes based on the set norm of reference for males and females to follow, children living with both parents or single parents to confer, and those firstborn or last-born to accept. In spite of the expectations brought by the society, it may not vary on how they develop their life skills.

B. Method

This study employed a quantitative research design, specifically a descriptive-correlational approach. This design allowed the researcher to determine whether one or more variables could influence another variable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, descriptive approach was used in assessing the level of life skills of adolescents in a Catholic University in Central Philippines. A correlational approach was determined whether the construct was related to the demographic variables of sex, birth order, and family structure. The respondents were 268 students enrolled in the academic year 2022-2023, who were determined using stratified random sampling.

The researcher used the Life Skills Assessment Scale instrument to gather data to assess adolescents' level of life skills. It was developed by Nair and Subasree (2014) and composed of a 100-item test that measures ten (10) dimensions of Life Skills such as self-awareness, empathy, effective communication, interpersonal relationship, creative thinking, critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, coping with emotion, and coping with stress.

Meanwhile, a five-point Likert scale was used to assess the study: 1-very low level, 2-low level, 3-average level, 4-high level, and 5-very high level. It has both negative and positive items. The negative items were required for reverse scoring. The 100 test items were arranged so that the one test item referring to each dimension being measured was arranged one after the other. Precise care was applied to ensure that the double-barreled statements were prevented. This questionnaire also could be individual or group administration. The scale was used to interpret the responses for the level of life skills in a Catholic University.

The instrument was validated by Subasree et al. (2014) and yielded a 89% concurrence using content and face validity. The questionnaire was pilot tested again by Pahilanga et al. (2023) to 30 non-actual respondents and garnered a reliable Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.92, which makes the instrument reliable and validated by experts.

The researcher distributed formal letters seeking permission to conduct the inventory of the study submitted to and approved by the Principal of the Catholic University. After the permission was granted, the guidance counselors of the Catholic University assisted in helping the researcher to gather the data. The researcher obtained the total population, calculated the sample size, and then randomly chose the respondents of the study.

Before the inventory, proper parental assent forms were distributed to the parents or guardians to inform them regarding their children's participation. With the consent of the parents or guardians, the conduct of the survey followed. During the survey proper, the researcher oriented the respondents about the study, especially the scope, nature, purpose, and their willingness to participate. Informed consent was obtained and attached to the questionnaire. The data collection started after signing the agreement form. After answering, they were instructed to pass the informed consent along with the questionnaire.

After the data collection, the data were treated with confidentiality to show respect to the respondents of the study. The data retrieved from the inventory were encoded and subjected to statistical treatment and analysis with the assistance of the statistician. Following the data analysis, the adolescents' responses to the questionnaires were properly disposed of.

C. Results and Discussion

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents, grouped according to sex, birth order, and family structure. In terms of sex, female adolescents have obtained a higher number ($f=153$, 57.1%). By birth order, the firstborn has the highest number ($f=147$, 54.9%). Moreover, for the family structure, the number of students who have parents living together (201, 75%) is higher than students who have parents that are not living together ($f=67$, 25%).

In general, the majority of the respondents are female firstborn adolescents from the intact family. Females got the highest number of respondents because there are more of them in terms of ratio than males in the population. Also, more female gave their consent to participate in the study. It is reported that prior participation in research and females expressed their interest in being part of the study (Otufowora, 2021). The adolescents in the Catholic university are mostly achievers and competitive. Meaning they tend to please their parents and the people around them. They also continue to assert their work ethics to be one step ahead of their younger siblings (Combs-Draughn, 2016), which is evident in relation to this study.

In a world with a lot of broken families, it is essential to note that in the Catholic university, there is a good representation coming from adolescents who have parents living together rather than adolescents from parents who are not living together. This means that most adolescents from non-intact families in the locale of the study may not likely have poorer family functioning, and they exhibit psychological and educational outcomes, such as poorer academic performance, more risky behavior, and declined overall well-being (Shek et al., 2015).

Table 1

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	f	%
Sex		
Male	115	42.9
Female	153	57.1
Birth Order		
First Born	147	54.9
Second Born	82	30.6
Later Born	39	14.6
Family Structure		
Parents Living Together	201	75.0
Parents not living together	67	25.0
Total	268	100%

Level of Life Skills enrolled in a Catholic University

General Life Skills

Table 2.D presents the level of life skills of adolescents as a whole. The data shows that the adolescents of a Catholic university have an average level of life skills ($M=3.28$, $SD=0.25$), which indicates that they moderately can adapt and create positive behavior depending on situations and the availability of resources.

In general, the average level of life skills obtained from the findings show that the adolescents can adapt and create positive behavior depending on situations and the availability of resources they have (Nair & Subasree, 2014). The tendencies to regress depending on the severity of the situations may happen if the adolescents think they have no resources to respond to changes. On the other hand, they may progress further once they feel equipped to respond to changes and with a positive disposition to do. As such, enhancement of the life skills of adolescents is essential to navigate life and for them to thrive in school and the world beyond.

This study is the same as the results of Pahilanga et al. (2023), Centeno (2020), Dhingra and Chauhan (2017), and Arati (2016), in which the respondents obtained an average level of life skills. This is contrary to the study of Choudhary and Ladwal (2020) that the majority of the respondents got a low level of life skills, which showed that they were having difficulty adapting and creating positive behavior to meet the demands of everyday life. With these results, the possibility of a life skills enhancement program may be realized to reach their highest level of life skills.

In the Philippines, the sudden shift in instructional modality brought about by the pandemic greatly affected Filipino students' frame of mind towards learning (Bual, 2021; Garcia & Bual, 2022; Pahilanga et al., 2023). As an outcome, it compromised the attainment of life skills. Most of them were not mentally ready since the modular-online mode of instruction was abruptly implemented (Pahilanga et al., 2023). With these, their motivation and learning interests were at risk, greatly influencing their acquisition of these skills (Gurrola, 2022; Pahilanga et al., 2023). Some were having issues with intrinsic motivation due to the stress brought on by the pandemic and academic requirements. Some transferred schools and even stopped schooling. As life returns to normal bit by bit, attention must be paid to transitioning back to face-to-face education. In the study of Zhang (2022), after the pandemic, the student's mental state became a concern due to the stay-at-home and the uncertainty created by the pandemic. As results show, adolescents have an average level of life skills. Thus, face-to-face education is one of the solutions to regain and improve the social skills and other essential skills of the students (Stoian et al., 2022).

From a different perspective, in regard to the average level of life skills, this can be attributed to either the phase of development of adolescents or due to the trends of the time. According to Erikson (1968), the focal point of developmental tasks for adolescents is to solve their identity versus role confusion crisis, arrive at their sense of identity, and find their social environment where they may fit in and create meaningful relationships with others (Ragelienė, 2016). Thus, it is normal to have an average level of life skills since they are still in pursuit of identifying who they are.

Moreover, adolescents encounter multiple social, psychological, and physiological changes at once in different life domains because of biological maturation, changes in social relationships, environmental changes, cognitive development, and school transitions (Puolakanaho et al., 2019). They are bombarded with many changes and do not yet have a strong foundation to deal with them. Also, these may elicit stress from them because of the rapid changes they are currently experiencing simultaneously (Salmela-Aro, 2017).

Furthermore, technological advancement brings a lot of disadvantages where everything seems instant, and people tend to be more impatient (McGivern, 2020). Benvenuti (2023) and Figueira and Oliveira (2017) also stated that the use of digital applications dramatically changed the way adolescents access information, whether it authentic or fake news, relate to their peers, engage in social gatherings and relationships, and their cognitive development because the constant access to the internet might hinder their memory abilities such as the ability to engage in effortful thinking.

Also, multitasking is a concern because of the adolescents' short attention span brought about by technology. In addition, 21st Century skills become a challenge to teach in school. Schools might teach diverse valuable skills, but many school curriculums do not teach life skills necessary to thrive in life (Akins, 2023). Generally, the academe set focuses only on making students intelligent without emphasizing developing their soft skills. Hence, teaching life skills should be integrated into the school curriculum and given daily by a teacher or counselor to enhance the student's mental health and help them equip them with better-adapted skills to face the everyday demands of life (Prajapati, 2017).

Demographics and Life Skills

The adolescents, when grouped according to all the demographics, such as sex, birth order, and family structure, showed an average level of life skills. By demographic variable in terms of sex, males ($M=3.31$, $SD=0.23$) and females ($M=3.26$, $SD=0.27$) got an average level of life skills. This shows that males have a slightly higher level of life skills than females. In terms of birth order, first, second, and later born also garnered average levels ($M=3.29$, $SD=0.27$), ($M=3.27$, $SD=0.21$), ($M=3.27$, $SD=0.26$) of life skills. With this, the firstborn has a slighter higher mean of life skills than the rest. For the family structure, parents living together and parents not living together showed an average level ($M=3.27$, $SD=0.24$), ($M=3.30$, $SD=0.29$) of life skills. Hence, parents not living together garnered a slightly higher level of life skills than parents living together.

The results showed that across demographics, the adolescents, whether male or female, firstborn, second born or last born, from parents living together to parents not living together, are at an average level in terms of their life skills. It indicates that they can adapt and create positive behavior moderately depending on situations and the availability of resources. It discounts the findings of Dhingra and Chauhan (2017) and Arati (2016) that males and females, family structure, and birth order had different levels of the dimensions of life skills.

Although this study did not venture to compare the level of life skills, it can be noteworthy that the male, firstborn, and parents not living together are slightly higher in mean scores. Dhingra and Chauhan (2017) mentioned that males scored higher than females in their life skills, although females had the edge over males in coping with stress, which is contrary to the result of this study. Conversely, Ghasemian and Kumar (2017) and Nantes et al. (2018) highlighted that there was no superiority in terms of sex. In regards to birth order, firstborns are typically found to have better educational outcomes because they are achievers and competitive (Barklay, 2015; Hotz & Pantano, 2015; Combs-Draughn, 2016). Furthermore, since they are born early when their parents are at an early stage of their careers and earn less, they are exposed early to the difficulties of life (Esposito et al., 2020). They are also more likely to lead and have good socialization skills (Black et al., 2018). In terms of family structure, Pahilanga et al. (2023) mentioned that non-intact families also garnered a slightly higher average mean score than intact families. However, it does not support the study of Sy and Hechanova (2020) that high family support of adolescents from intact families has higher life skills.

Dimensions of Life Skills

In regards with the dimensions, the lowest life skill is coping with stress ($M=2.41$, $SD=0.60$), and the highest in terms of dimension is self-awareness ($M=3.72$, $SD=0.48$). It is also to be considered by them to work on and emphasize how they cope with stress, given that they gained the lowest score in this area, which indicates that they hardly recognize the sources of stress, understand its effects, and relax without making the situation worse. Meanwhile, the adolescents gained a higher rating in their self-awareness and life skills. This means they know themselves and recognize their characters, strengths, and things to improve, desires, and dislikes (Nair & Subasree, 2014).

The adolescents also showed a high level of creative thinking ($M=3.62$, $SD=0.55$), critical thinking ($M=3.43$, $SD=0.44$), and problem-solving skills ($M=3.66$, $SD=0.53$). The findings revealed that adolescents in a Catholic university could generate innovative ideas, be logical in thinking and

reasoning, and deal constructively with a problem that comes into their lives (Nair & Subasree, 2014). It also manifested that some of the dimensions of life skills garnered an average level of life skills, such as empathy ($M=3.40$, $SD=0.44$), effective communication ($M=3.03$, $SD=0.49$), interpersonal relationship ($M=3.24$, $SD=0.42$), decision-making ($M=3.31$, $SD=0.38$), and coping with emotions ($M=2.86$, $SD=0.52$). It showed that adolescents in a Catholic University could moderately understand and accept different kinds of people, establish, initiate, and maintain positive social and working relationships, choose alternatives in various situations, and understand one's and others' feelings (Nair & Subasree, 2014).

Specific to the dimensions, having a low level of coping with stress may be explained by academic stress, which is still increasing. This is because the academic demands of the students did not change even during the condition brought on by the pandemic and strongly impacted their learning motivation as well (Lubis & Putris, 2022). The more they feel stressed, the more it affects their emotional aspect (Cayaon, 2022; Cabrera et al., 2020; Pahilanga et al., 2023). Thus, stress could be affected by the academic requirements, especially performance tasks and paper works that may be heavy to them that contribute a lot to their health issues and stress (Ozer & Bertelsen, 2020; Purwanti et al., 2021; Cleofas, 2021; Lubis et al., 2022; Pahilanga et al., 2023).

Moreover, the adolescents scored least in coping with stress, emphasizing the need to acquire this skill to deal with the everyday demands of life. Similarly, Dhingra and Chauhan (2017), Garcia (2019), and Avci and Korur (2022) showed in their results that coping with stress garnered a low level of life skills. It is probably because adolescence is a period where rapid changes occur, coping with them might be difficult for them, and they are intertwined with stress in their lives (Hatunoglu, 2020). Hence, these findings imply that the institution should not take this lightly and consider it a vital way to strengthen their coping styles in their academic curriculum through programs and activities.

The high level of self-awareness in this result is contrary to the results of Khalili and Swilem (2021) that the self-awareness of adolescents was low. It also shows that the respondents of this study tend to observe themselves more than others. On the other hand, several studies (Dhingra & Chauhan, 2017; Bischocho, 2021; Pahilanga et al., 2023) revealed a high level of self-awareness in adolescents. If adolescents obtain a high level of self-awareness, they have a better-integrated sense of self-forms and can also evaluate their abilities (Zlotnik & Toglia, 2018). Thus, these findings implicate that the university will not only focus on the lowest area, which is coping with stress but also give attention to all dimensions of life skills to continue to strengthen the foundation of adolescents.

Table 2. A. Level of Life Skills of Adolescents Enrolled in a Catholic University

Variable	Self Awareness			Empathy			Effective Communication		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Sex									
Male	3.78	0.46	HL	3.28	0.43	AL	3.05	0.46	AL
Female	3.67	0.49	HL	3.49	0.42	AL	3.01	0.52	AL
Birth Order									
First	3.74	0.48	HL	3.39	0.44	AL	3.05	0.52	AL
Second	3.70	0.45	HL	3.39	0.45	AL	2.96	0.44	AL
Later	3.67	0.54	HL	3.45	0.39	HL	3.11	0.50	AL
Family Structure									
Parents Living Together	3.72	0.46	HL	3.38	0.41	AL	3.06	0.50	AL
Parents Not Living Together	3.72	0.54	HL	3.45	0.49	HL	2.95	0.46	AL
Whole	3.72	0.48	HL	3.40	0.44	AL	3.03	0.49	AL

Note: 1.00-1.80=Very low level (VLL), 1.81-2.60=Low level (LL), 2.61-3.40=Average level (AL), 3.41-4.20=High level (HL), 4.21-5.00=Very high level (VHL)

Table 2. B. Level of Life Skills of Adolescents Enrolled in a Catholic University

Variable	Interpersonal Relationship			Creative Thinking			Critical Thinking		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Sex									
Male	3.30	0.40	AL	3.63	0.51	HL	3.47	0.37	HL
Female	3.19	0.43	AL	3.62	0.58	HL	3.41	0.49	AL
Birth Order									
First	3.28	0.43	AL	3.64	0.58	HL	3.46	0.47	HL
Second	3.16	0.41	AL	3.64	0.50	HL	3.43	0.36	HL
Later	3.22	0.39	AL	3.51	0.53	HL	3.36	0.50	AL
Family Structure									
Parents Living Together	3.23	0.41	AL	3.59	0.53	HL	3.41	0.43	HL
Parents Not Living Together	3.25	0.46	AL	3.72	0.59	HL	3.51	0.48	HL
Whole	3.24	0.42	AL	3.62	0.55	HL	3.43	0.44	HL

Note: 1.00-1.80=Very low level (VLL), 1.81-2.60=Low level (LL), 2.61-3.40=Average level (AL), 3.41-4.20=High level (HL), 4.21-5.00=Very high level (VHL)

Table 2.C. Level of Life Skills of Adolescents Enrolled in a Catholic University

Variable	Decision Making			Problem Solving			Coping With Emotions		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Sex									
Male	3.29	0.33	AL	3.74	0.50	HL	2.95	0.48	AL
Female	3.33	0.41	AL	3.60	0.54	HL	2.80	0.55	AL
Birth Order									
First	3.28	0.39	AL	3.66	0.55	HL	2.90	0.54	AL
Second	3.36	0.35	AL	3.65	0.44	HL	2.81	0.49	AL
Later	3.31	0.37	AL	3.68	0.61	HL	2.86	0.53	AL
Family Structure									
Parents Living Together	3.31	0.36	AL	3.63	0.51	HL	2.89	0.51	AL
Parents Not Living Together	3.32	0.42	AL	3.77	0.56	HL	2.80	0.56	AL
Whole	3.31	0.38	AL	3.66	0.53	HL	2.86	0.52	AL

Note: 1.00-1.80=Very low level (VLL), 1.81-2.60=Low level (LL), 2.61-3.40=Average level (AL), 3.41-4.20=High level (HL), 4.21-5.00=Very high level (VHL)

Table 2.D. Level of Life Skills of Adolescents Enrolled in a Catholic University

Variable	Coping With Stress			Life Skills		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Sex						
Male	2.50	0.60	LL	3.31	0.23	AL
Female	2.34	0.59	LL	3.26	0.27	AL
Birth Order						
First	2.37	0.58	LL	3.29	0.27	AL
Second	2.45	0.63	LL	3.27	0.21	AL
Later	2.44	0.62	LL	3.27	0.26	AL
Family Structure						
Parents Living Together	2.41	0.59	LL	3.27	0.24	AL
Parents Not Living Together	2.39	0.63	LL	3.30	0.29	AL
Whole	2.41	0.60	LL	3.28	0.25	AL

Note: 1.00-1.80=Very low level (VLL), 1.81-2.60=Low level (LL), 2.61-3.40=Average level (AL), 3.41-4.20=High level (HL), 4.21-5.00=Very high level (VHL)

Relationship between Level of Life Skills and Demographics

Table 3 shows the relationship between the level of life skills and sex, birth order, and family structure of adolescents. A point-biserial correlation was used, and it showed that the sex [$r(266)=-0.094$, $p=0.124$], family structure [$r(266)=0.044$, $p=0.478$], and birth order [$r_s(266)=-0.037$, $p=0.549$] have no significant relationship with their life skills. Thus, the null hypotheses were accepted.

Sex was found to have no significant relationship with life skills. These findings were supported by Steptoe and Wardle (2017) and Dhingra Chauhan (2017), and Nantes et al. (2018), that concluded that there is no link between both sexes and life skills.

Further, birth order was shown to have no relationship with life skills. These findings claimed a similar statement by Arati (2016). They contradicted the study of Pavan (2016) that firstborns tend to outperform their younger siblings in many skills, especially cognitive skills. Later-born siblings had more edge in social development.

Moreover, the family structure revealed no relationship with life skills, which means regardless if the parents are intact or not, it does not affect their life skills. It is supported by Saravanakumar (2019) and Pahilanga et al. (2023) that there was no significant relationship between parents living together and parents not living together and life skills. It contradicts the claim of Sy and Hechanova (2020) that adolescents with high family support are more likely from intact family have higher life skills.

The absence of a relationship between sex, birth order, and family structure indicates that these demographics do not influence adolescents' development and acquisition of life skills. Based on the studies of Dhingra and Chauhan (2017), Arati (2016), and Pahilanga et al. (2023), sex, birth order, and family structure had no significant relationship with the life skills of adolescents.

Table 3. Relationship between Level of Life Skills and Demographics

Variable	r	df	p
Sex	-0.094	266	0.124
Family Structure	0.044	266	0.478
Variable	rs	df	p
Birth Order	-0.037	266	0.549

Note: relationship is significant when $p \leq 0.05$

Overall, the results established that the demographic variables of sex, birth order, and family structure do not influence the life skills of adolescents. In relation to the theory, Bandura (2012), posits that individual out of a personal agency, creates social systems aligning with his gender roles, ordinal position, and others that may influence his self-development, adapting to his environment, and changing his ways. In this regard, the results of the study may have strengthened the idea that a person is not just a product of his life circumstances, like if he is a male, a firstborn, or came from a broken family because he creates his life circumstances. Further, it is not necessarily sex that influences life skills, but it can be the gender roles that vary in culture and norms, or the social expectations set by others and even the trail of past experiences or learnings. These findings show that the demographic variables or given dispositions in terms of sex, birth order, and family structure may not be enough as indicators of life skills.

The lack of relationship between the demographics and life skills showed that there might be other factors that may affect the life skills of the adolescents. Dhingra and Chauhan (2017) revealed that only parental education is slightly correlated with the life skills of adolescents. The educational background of the parents plays a crucial role in making them aware of their children's needs and not whether they are living together or separated. Educated parents are more conscious about the developmental opportunities of their children. With this, they can give a conducive environment to their children, a better education, and growth pertaining to life skills development. Meanwhile, in the study of Kuluski et al. (2017), social support is an important factor in every individual in terms of providing a buffer against adverse life events. Having support from friends and family to turn to at times can provide psychological and material resources for a better life disposition (Robinson, 2016). These variables may be considered for

future studies to identify the indicators of life skills.

D. Conclusion

Life skills are vital to adolescents since they are experiencing a critical period that may hinder or foster their development in many areas. Regardless of the respondents' demographic backgrounds, adolescents got an average level of life skills. The huge adjustments that adolescents are experiencing, such as physiological, psychological, and social changes, affect their acquisition of life skills. Also, there is the aftermath of the pandemic, wherein the students' mental state became a concern because of the uncertainties.

Furthermore, the phase of development or trends of time may be a factor too that resulted in the average level of life skills of the adolescents. This implies the enhancement in their life skills to reach the highest level. As the findings reveal, the need to further develop life skills should be considered. The life skills enhancement program is an essential component that will help adolescents reach the optimum level of life skills. It will build lifelong learning, especially in dealing with life's challenges and demands. Hence, implementing a life skills enhancement program will help the Guidance Office to attain its objective to assist the adolescents to understand and accept oneself and others to enable them to make realistic choices and achieve self-direction.

E. Limitations of the Study

This study recognizes the limitation in terms of the general findings that only cover adolescents, as they were only classified to have participated in the study. Another perceived limitation is that the results of the study were only the perceptions of the respondents. Based on the findings, the differences in the results could have been caused by extraneous variables present when the survey was administered. Further, even though face-to-face classes are back, the student's mental state is compromised because of the stay-at-home and the turmoil brought about by the pandemic. This study also observed that they have low levels of coping with stress, probably because of their academic requirements and performance tasks. The results might have differed if the adolescents' disposition had been better. These may have been why they only achieved an average level of life skills and garnered a low level of coping with stress. The researcher takes into consideration this as the limitation too of the conduct of her study. Employing a comparative analysis could have more depth in terms of differences in the level of life skills. A qualitative research method could have discovered more salient findings and the life skills of adolescents in a Catholic university.

F. Practical Application

The paper has value to the guidance counselors and allied mental health professionals. The enhancement of the life skills program will help the adolescents to boost and reach their highest level of life skills. They may also offer activities, such as seminar workshops, especially in discovering coping strategies for dealing with stress, but without ignoring the other dimensions because every dimension of life skills is essential. With this endeavor, they will improve their attitude and outlook in life and build a strong resiliency to recover quickly from difficulties.

Furthermore, the results of the study also contribute to the new body of knowledge and have significant value in the scientific community, particularly; more research-based life skills programs may be implemented that will help adolescents how to navigate everyday demands of

life.

G. Directions for Future Research

The present study recommends that future researchers may conduct a study on the life skills of adolescents in other Catholic universities or public schools and may explore different demographic variables, such as parental education and social support. Future researchers may focus on each dimension where the relationship is concerned. They may also perform similar studies through qualitative research design or mixed methods.

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