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Assessment of 21st Century Skills in Social Science Courses Among College Students

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Abstract

As the educational system evolves to meet the demands of the modern world, students must develop both academic and professional competencies for future success. This study was conducted to assess the 21st century skills in Social Science courses among college students at the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines, academic year 2023-2024. The study utilized a descriptive-correlational design and employed stratified random sampling to ensure a representative sample of one hundred forty-six (146) students. Data were collected through a researcher-made questionnaire for attitudes toward Social Science and a survey questionnaire patterned from the Partnership for 21st Century Learning framework. Statistical tools such as frequency, mean, standard deviation, percentage, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation were employed to analyze the data.

Findings revealed that most students were 23 years old and below, female, single, from families earning ₱15,000 and below monthly, with parents whose highest educational attainment is high school graduate, and having 4–6 siblings. They exhibited very high proficiency in life and career skills but low proficiency in information, media, and technology skills. Gender and attitude toward Social Science showed a significant correlation with skill levels, with female students and those with a more positive attitude demonstrating higher proficiency. However, no significant relationship was found between other demographic factors and students' 21st century skills. In conclusion, life and career skills are not only critical for students' academic success but also essential for their personal growth and professional development. It is recommended that teachers are encouraged to teach students valuable information using diverse instructional materials to enhance students' knowledge.

Keywords: Assessment, 21st Century Skills, Social Science

Introduction

In today's rapidly changing world, education is no longer limited to the simple acquisition of knowledge. The demands of the 21st Century require students to develop a broad range of skills that prepare them to navigate a world defined by constant change, globalization, and technological advancement. For students who have completed Social Science courses, education should go beyond understanding theories and concepts — it should empower them to apply what they have learned in solving real-world problems. As future leaders, policymakers, educators, and community members, these students need more than academic knowledge; they must develop essential 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, adaptability, and technological proficiency.

As these students move from the classroom to society, an important question arises if they are equipped with the skills necessary to thrive in today's world. The Social Sciences play a critical role in helping students understand the intricacies of human behavior, societal change, and cultural dynamics. Through subjects like Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, and Psychology, students gain valuable insights into the challenges faced by individuals and communities. However, mastering Social Science concepts on a theoretical level is only part of the educational journey. Equally important is whether students are capable of applying this knowledge to address pressing issues, engage in meaningful dialogue, and contribute to the development of their communities.

In this context, 21st Century skills serve as the bridge between knowledge and action. These skills are typically grouped into three major categories: Learning and Innovation Skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration; information, media, and technology skills, which is the ability to effectively use and evaluate information and technology; and life and career skills including adaptability, leadership, responsibility, and productivity. In an era defined by rapid technological change, global interconnectedness, and evolving social issues, the ability to think critically, solve problems creatively, and communicate across cultures is more important than ever. The Social Sciences, with their emphasis on understanding people and societies, are ideally positioned to help students develop these abilities — but the question remains whether these outcomes are fully achieved in current educational practices.

This study is anchored on the need to assess how well students who have completed Social Science courses at the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines - Jasaan are prepared to meet the demands of modern life. It seeks to determine whether these students possess the critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and technological skills necessary to succeed in various professional and social contexts. By focusing on these core competencies, the study hopes to shed light on how effective Social Science education is in cultivating the skills students need to adapt, innovate, and lead in a rapidly evolving society.

Moreover, this research recognizes that 21st Century Skills are essential for contributing to community and national development. As the university envisions producing graduates who are not only knowledgeable but also socially responsible and equipped to address contemporary issues, it is crucial to evaluate whether the current curriculum in Social Science courses reflects this goal. If students are to become effective agents of change, they must be able to analyze real-life problems, make informed decisions, and implement solutions that benefit society as a whole.

Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the broader conversation on the role of higher education in preparing students for life beyond the classroom. It emphasizes that education must be holistic — not only focusing on knowledge but also on practical skills and values that promote civic engagement and social responsibility. By examining the readiness of Social Science students in terms of 21st century skills, this research hopes to inform educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in enhancing educational approaches that respond to the demands of today's world.

The Problem

The main objective of this study was to assess the 21st century skills in social science courses among college students in the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines - Jasaan Academic Year 2023-2024. Specifically, this aims to describe the respondents' characteristics, examine the 21st Century Skills among college students in Social Science courses, and determine the significant

relationship between the 21st century skills among college students in Social Science courses and each of their characteristics.

The Literature

This part presents the related studies, articles, and literature on the variables used in this study and the 21st Century Skills in Social Sciences, which have significant bearing on the present study. These are categorized and presented according to the variables considered in this paper.

Respondents Characteristics

This section reviews relevant literature and studies that examine how respondents' characteristics—such as age, sex, civil status, parents' educational attainment, family monthly income, number of siblings, and attitude toward Social Sciences—relate to the development of 21st century skills.

Age

Age-related cognitive changes significantly impact learning processes, a topic explored extensively in recent literature. For instance, Young (2020) provides a comprehensive analysis of how cognitive aging affects learning capabilities, focusing on the decline in processing speed and memory functions with age. The study notes that while cognitive processing tends to slow down, older individuals often benefit from their accumulated knowledge, which can enhance problem-solving and decision-making abilities despite the decline in fluid intelligence. This aligns with the findings of Smith and Jones (2021), who discovered that older learners employ strategic approaches to mitigate cognitive challenges, thereby leveraging their extensive experience to maintain academic performance.

Moreover, Taylor and Martin (2022) further elaborate on these findings by examining how experience-based knowledge can counterbalance the effects of cognitive aging. Their research emphasizes that while older adults may experience a decline in processing speed and working memory, their ability to apply accumulated knowledge and use learned strategies can sustain effective learning. Johnson and Wilson (2022) also highlight the importance of tailored educational interventions to support older learners. They found that strategies designed to accommodate cognitive changes, such as breaking tasks into smaller steps and providing additional time for assignments, can significantly enhance learning outcomes for older students.

In addition, the complexity of cognitive aging underscores the need for educational strategies that consider these changes. Research indicates that while cognitive functions may decline, the accumulation of knowledge and experience continues to grow. Consequently, educational practices should focus on harnessing the strengths of older learners by incorporating their wealth of experience into the learning process. For instance, incorporating reflective practices and peer teaching opportunities can help older students utilize their accumulated knowledge effectively, improving their learning experience.

Sex

Sex differences in academic achievement and innovation competencies have been the subject of recent research, revealing nuanced insights into how sex influences educational outcomes. Ferreras-Garcia, Sales-Zaguirre, and Serradell-López (2021) identified that female students generally demonstrate higher levels of innovation competence compared to male students, particularly in interpersonal and networking skills. This finding highlights a significant disparity in specific competencies, emphasizing the need for educational practices that address these differences. Similarly, Marantika (2022) explored the relationship between learning preferences and academic achievement, finding that sex plays a role in

determining preferred learning modalities. The study revealed that while both male and female students have distinct learning preferences, aligning instructional methods with these preferences can significantly improve academic performance. This underscores the importance of tailoring educational approaches to accommodate diverse learning styles, regardless of sex. Additionally, Li (2023) investigated sex-based interaction patterns in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, uncovering distinct differences in teacher-student interactions based on sex. Li's study revealed that female students often receive less attention from teachers compared to male peers, which can impact their academic performance. This disparity in attention allocation raises concerns about equity in educational settings and suggests the need for strategies to ensure that all students receive equitable support.

Furthermore, Lee and Kim (2023) reviewed sex disparities in STEM education, finding that while female students often excel in certain areas, targeted interventions are necessary to address gaps in others. Thomas and Patel (2021) also explored how sex-based biases in classroom interactions can affect academic outcomes, emphasizing the importance of addressing these biases to improve educational equity. Collectively, these findings highlight the need for educational strategies that recognize and address sex differences to promote fairness and effectively support all students.

Civil Status

The impact of civil status on academic performance is a significant area of research, particularly in understanding how marriage affects students' academic experiences. Moumi (2022) examined how marriage influences college students' ability to balance academic and familial responsibilities. The study found that married students, especially women, face unique challenges in managing academic obligations alongside marital and familial duties. This finding is consistent with Wang and Liu (2021), who reported that married students often struggle with balancing their academic and personal lives due to additional responsibilities.

Nguyen and Zhang (2023) highlighted the role of support systems in helping married students navigate these challenges. Their research found that institutional support, such as flexible scheduling and counseling services, can significantly benefit married students by helping them manage their academic and personal responsibilities more effectively. Also, Ajao (2021) emphasized the importance of viewing educators as surrogate parents, which can enhance the learning environment for married students by providing additional support and understanding.

Moreover, Singh and Sharma (2020) found that married individuals generally experience more difficulty achieving work-life balance than their unmarried counterparts. This finding is relevant to the academic context, as married students may face similar challenges in balancing their educational and personal responsibilities. Therefore, targeted support and understanding from educational institutions are crucial to helping married students succeed academically. These insights underscore the importance of developing supportive educational policies and practices that accommodate the needs of married students.

Parents' Educational Attainment

The influence of parents' educational attainment on children's academic performance has been a focal point in educational research. Lim (2021) found that while parental involvement is a critical factor in academic success, the direct impact of parents' educational levels on their children's performance is less pronounced than previously thought. This suggests that active parental engagement plays a more significant role in determining academic outcomes than the level of parental education.

Similarly, Nguyen and Chen (2022) supported this perspective, demonstrating that children benefit more from their parents' active involvement in their education than from the parents' educational attainment alone. Casas (2023) further explored this relationship, revealing that while parents' educational levels can influence the support and resources available to students, the quality of parental involvement is a more critical determinant of academic success.

Furthermore, Jackson and Rivera (2022) found that parental educational attainment affects the level of support and resources that parents can provide to their children. This highlights the need for educational strategies that engage parents in supporting their children's education, regardless of their own educational backgrounds. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective strategies to enhance parental involvement and support student achievement.

Family Monthly Income

The relationship between family income and academic performance is complex and multifaceted. Casas (2023) found that students often do not perceive their economic background as a major barrier to academic success, challenging the assumption that low income directly impacts academic performance. This perspective is supported by Wiborg (2022), who found that financial resources can play a significant role in addressing academic challenges, particularly for students struggling with low performance.

Additionally, Smith and White (2021) demonstrated that while financial resources can provide advantages, the impact of family income on academic success is moderated by factors such as student motivation and resilience. Baker and Lee (2023) confirmed that students from lower-income families can achieve high academic performance with adequate support and resources, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions that address both financial and non-financial factors.

These findings suggest that while family income can influence academic outcomes, it is not the sole determinant of success. Educational strategies should focus on providing support and resources to all students, regardless of their economic background, to ensure equitable opportunities for academic achievement. Recognizing the complex interplay between financial resources and academic performance is crucial for developing effective educational policies and practices.

Number of Siblings

The effect of the number of siblings on academic performance has been the subject of various studies, revealing nuanced insights into how family size influences educational outcomes. Feng (2020) found that sibling size impacts academic performance, particularly in households with lower socioeconomic status and less educated parents. This finding is consistent with Neisi and Sadeghi (2023), who reported a weak and negative association between sibling size and academic performance, suggesting that the influence of sibling size is mediated by other factors such as family dynamics and resources.

Furthermore, Johnson and Roberts (2022) explored how larger family sizes can lead to resource constraints that may affect academic achievement. Their research found that the availability of educational resources and support is more critical in determining academic success than the sheer number of siblings. Baker and Lewis (2023) further emphasized that while the number of siblings can have some influence on academic performance, other factors, such as family support and educational resources, play a more substantial role.

These findings suggest that while the number of siblings can impact academic outcomes, it is essential to consider other factors, such as family support and resources. Educational policies and practices should focus on addressing these broader factors to support students effectively, regardless of family size.

Understanding the complex interplay between sibling size and academic performance is crucial for developing strategies that enhance educational outcomes for all students.

Attitude Towards Social Sciences

Students' attitudes towards Social Sciences are significantly influenced by the classroom environment. Frimpong (2020) found that an open and participatory classroom climate positively affects students' attitudes towards learning Social Sciences. This study highlights the importance of creating a learning environment that fosters respect for students' ideas and encourages democratic leadership behaviors.

Similarly, Harwood (2021) supported these findings by demonstrating that classroom environments that promote student participation and free expression enhance engagement with social studies concepts. Blankenship (2022) further confirmed that democratic classroom practices contribute to more favorable attitudes toward civic education, emphasizing the role of the teacher in creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Additionally, Hepburn (2023) highlighted the crucial role of teachers in shaping classroom climates that foster self-direction, open dialogue, and egalitarian treatment. The study underscores that the teacher's approach to managing the classroom has a direct impact on students' attitudes toward Social Sciences and their overall learning experience. These findings collectively emphasize the importance of creating supportive and interactive classroom environments to enhance students' attitudes and academic success in Social Sciences.

Respondents' Assessment of 21st Century Skills in Social Science

The integration of 21st Century Skills into Social Science education is essential for equipping students with the competencies needed to navigate and contribute to a complex world. Recent literature focuses on how these skills—such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and digital literacy—impact students' learning experiences and outcomes within social sciences.

Critical thinking and problem-solving are foundational 21st Century Skills that are increasingly emphasized in social science curricula. Martinez and Zhang (2021) investigated how inquiry-based learning approaches enhance students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Their study found that students engaged in tasks such as case studies and research projects demonstrated significant improvements in their analytical skills and their ability to address complex social issues effectively.

In a similar vein, Lee and Kim (2022) examined the effects of project-based learning on students' critical thinking in social sciences. Their research highlighted that students involved in projects requiring real-world problem-solving developed stronger analytical skills and a more profound understanding of social science concepts. This approach not only fostered critical thinking but also encouraged the practical application of theoretical knowledge.

Collaboration and communication are integral to 21st-century skills and are crucial for effective social science education. Green and Brown (2023) explored how collaborative learning environments impact students' communication skills and teamwork. They found that students participating in group discussions and collaborative projects developed enhanced interpersonal skills and a greater ability to articulate their ideas, which is essential for understanding diverse perspectives in social sciences.

Similarly, White et al. (2024) focused on the benefits of collaborative assignments in social science courses. Their study revealed that group-based activities improved students' communication and collaboration skills, leading to increased engagement and a deeper grasp of social science topics. This approach not only supports skill development but also helps students learn to work effectively with others.

Digital literacy is becoming increasingly important in education, and its integration into social science curricula offers significant benefits. Smith and Davis (2022) examined how digital tools and resources enhance students' digital literacy and research skills. Their research highlighted that students who effectively used digital platforms for research and communication demonstrated improved information management abilities and a better grasp of social science content.

In addition, Johnson and Martinez (2023) emphasized the role of digital literacy in preparing students for future careers. Their study found that students proficient in using digital tools were better equipped to handle complex tasks and engage in meaningful research. The ability to navigate digital resources and communicate online is crucial for success in both academic and professional settings.

Assessing 21st century skills poses challenges, but recent studies have explored effective methods for evaluating these competencies. Lee and Anderson (2024) investigated various assessment methods for 21st century skills in Social Sciences. Their research suggests that formative assessments, including self-assessments and peer reviews, provide valuable insights into students' skill development and application.

White and Taylor (2022) proposed using digital portfolios as a tool for assessing 21st-century skills. Their study found that digital portfolios allow students to document and reflect on their learning experiences, providing a comprehensive view of their growth in critical thinking, collaboration, and other essential skills. This approach facilitates a detailed assessment of students' abilities and their application in real-world contexts.

Despite the progress in integrating 21st century skills into Social Science education, challenges remain. Green and Roberts (2021) highlighted issues such as the need for innovative instructional strategies and effective assessment tools to fully realize the potential of these skills in Social Sciences. Addressing these challenges involves ongoing research and adaptation of educational practices to meet students' evolving needs.

Chen and Wang (2023) advocated for continued exploration of instructional and assessment strategies to enhance the development of 21st century skills among Social Science students. Their research underscores the importance of adapting educational practices to ensure that students are well-prepared to face the complexities of the modern world.

Learning and Innovation Skills

The research carried out by Kwangmuang et al. (2021) defines learning and innovation skills as the rich interaction of practices, methods, and designs oriented toward improving teaching and helping learning in higher education. It does not develop in isolation; instead, it is a dynamic, multifaceted process that requires the thoughtful incorporation of innovative educational strategies, techniques, and the general structure of learning experiences. This complexity underlines the need for educators to continue experimenting, collaborating, and refining their methodologies to meet the ever-changing demands of contemporary learners.

Ultimately, these efforts work towards ensuring that teaching stays relevant and impactful, preparing students for the challenges to succeed in a rapidly evolving world through the critical skills and creativity needed. The importance of critical thinking skills and learning motivation has been a leading issue in recent educational research that propels the progress of new models of learning. According to Sari, Sumarmi, Astina, Utomo, and Ridhwan (2021), students need to develop their critical thinking skills, which requires the transformation from traditional, teacher-centered methods into more innovative, student-centered educational approaches. Innovative models look beyond rote memorization, a method that has long dominated education, to instead encourage approaches that foster inquiry,

problem-solving, and the application of knowledge in diverse contexts.

Sari et al. (2021) further elaborate on the manner in which these models reflect the general aims of ensuring learners are equipped with capabilities that enable them to grapple with the complexities of the 21st century. By embedding the practice of critical thinking into the learning experience, the models enhance motivation and involvement, thus making learning more relevant and impactful to society today.

In this regard, several researchers have explored how learning models can better support critical thinking skills, thereby showing their transformative potential. These approaches highlight the development of education toward intellectual independence and lifelong learning.

Information, Media and Technology Skills

The increasing digitalization of various aspects of life—education, work, and daily activities—has created a pressing need for individuals to develop essential skills in information, media, and technology. These skills are often grouped under the umbrella of digital literacy, which encompasses a wide range of competencies necessary to navigate modern society effectively. The rapidly evolving landscape of the digital world has emphasized the importance of these skills, which include information literacy, media literacy, and ICT (Information and Communication Technology) literacy. These areas collectively form the bedrock of what is known as digital competence. Digital literacy has become a fundamental skill for individuals seeking to participate actively in society, both personally and professionally (Laar et al., 2020).

A crucial framework in understanding digital literacy is the European Commission's Digital Competence Framework, known as DigComp 2.1., this is a comprehensive model for evaluating digital skills across various domains. According to this framework, digital literacy is categorized into five main areas: information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety, and problem-solving. These domains highlight the multifaceted nature of digital competence, focusing on the ability to search for, evaluate, and use information effectively, as well as the importance of being able to create digital content, ensure safety, and use technology to solve real-world problems (Carretero, Vuorikari & Punie, 2020).

The framework emphasizes that digital competence is not merely about technical skills; it also entails an understanding of digital ethics, the importance of security, and the responsible use of media. In particular, the framework stresses the importance of critical thinking in digital environments to combat misinformation and foster responsible digital citizenship. This recognition of digital ethics as a key component of digital literacy ensures that individuals do not only know how to use technology but also how to do so in ways that are ethical and responsible (Carretero et al., 2020).

The significance of digital literacy in education has evolved significantly over the past few decades. The shift from merely using technology in educational settings to fostering digital fluency. This evolution indicates that students should not just consume digital content but should be encouraged to critically engage with it, analyze its implications, and actively create their own content. This shift is in line with the constructivist learning theory, which asserts that students learn best through active engagement and knowledge construction. Traditional education models must, therefore, be restructured to include active learning through technology, ensuring that students develop digital fluency and are prepared for the rapidly changing demands of the workforce (Falloon, 2020).

Similarly, digital literacy should go beyond passive consumption to include active content creation. They stress that education systems should focus on teaching students to critically evaluate and create dig

ital information rather than simply memorizing technological functions. This active engagement with technology can enhance students' problem-solving abilities and creative skills, both of which are essential in today's digital world. In an age where information is abundant and easily accessible, the ability to discern credible sources and produce high-quality content has become essential for academic success (Kimmons, Veletsianos & Woodward, 2022).

As digital literacy continues to evolve, so does the approach to integrating technology in education. Blended learning as an effective way to combine traditional classroom instruction with digital learning tools. Their research suggests that this hybrid model can help foster higher-order thinking skills, adaptability, and digital competence among students. By incorporating both face-to-face and digital learning experiences, students can gain a deeper understanding of course content and develop critical digital skills that are essential for success in the modern workforce (Vázquez-Cano, Meneses & López, 2021).

Furthermore, the role of artificial intelligence in education and its potential to personalize learning experiences. AI-powered systems can assess students' progress, provide tailored feedback, and identify areas that need improvement. These adaptive learning technologies have the potential to revolutionize education by offering individualized learning experiences. However, they also bring up concerns about data privacy, the over reliance on AI, and the reduction of human interaction in educational settings. While AI holds promise, it is crucial to strike a balance between leveraging its benefits and ensuring that students still receive meaningful human interactions (Baker & Smith, 2021).

In addition to its importance in education, digital literacy plays a crucial role in preparing individuals for the workforce. Over 90% of future jobs will require some level of digital literacy, which includes a range of skills such as data analysis, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, digital marketing, and software development. As the job market continues to evolve in response to technological advancements, it is clear that digital competence is no longer a luxury but a necessity for workforce readiness (The World Economic Forum, 2020).

The Future of Jobs Report highlights key digital skills that will shape the workforce of tomorrow. These include expertise in data analysis, AI, cybersecurity, and cloud computing. The report stresses that workers who are equipped with these skills will be better positioned to succeed in the rapidly changing job market. In particular, the ability to adapt to new technologies and solve complex problems will be highly valued by employers across various sectors (Future of Jobs Report, 2020)

ADB emphasizes the importance of digital skills in the context of global labor markets. Their report states that developing economies must focus on digital upskilling in order to remain competitive. Countries that invest in digital education and ICT training programs will be better equipped to handle the challenges posed by automation and technological disruptions. This highlights the need for governments and institutions to prioritize digital skills development to ensure that individuals can thrive in the digital economy (Asian Development Bank, 2021).

While the benefits of digital literacy are undeniable, the digital divide remains a significant challenge. It explores the role that disparities in digital access and literacy play in perpetuating social inequality. They argue that individuals in marginalized communities, particularly those in developing regions or with lower socio-economic statuses, often lack access to the necessary tools and training to develop digital literacy. This gap in digital access can exacerbate existing inequalities, preventing certain groups from fully participating in the digital economy (Helsper & Van Deursen, 2021).

Similarly, Vaportzis, Clausen, and Gow (2021) highlight the challenges faced by older adults in acquiring digital literacy skills. Their study points out that while younger generations are quick to adopt new technologies, many older adults struggle with digital tools due to a lack of exposure and confidence. Targeted digital literacy programs are necessary to ensure that older adults can continue to engage in lifelong learning and stay connected to society. These efforts will promote social inclusion and ensure that no group is left behind as digital technologies continue to shape the world.

In response to the rapid pace of technological change, there is a growing emphasis on lifelong learning. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2021) argues that continuous upskilling and reskilling are essential to help individuals adapt to new technologies. As new technologies emerge, the skill sets required by workers and students also evolve. To remain competitive and adaptable, individuals must engage in lifelong learning, which includes formal and informal educational opportunities throughout their lives.

UNESCO (2022) also supports the concept of a learning society where education extends beyond formal schooling to include continuous personal and professional development. This approach is particularly important in the digital age, where technological advancements are rapid and pervasive. Lifelong learning ensures that individuals can adapt to changes in the digital landscape, acquire new skills, and remain employable in a constantly evolving job market.

Life and Career Skills

In the face of rapid technological advancements and global interconnectedness, the importance of life and career skills has never been greater. These skills are not only critical for students' academic success but also essential for their personal growth and professional development. In the 21st century, life and career skills are necessary for navigating the complexities of modern life and achieving success in an ever-evolving job market. These skills encompass a range of competencies that help individuals manage their personal lives, build meaningful relationships, make informed decisions, and thrive in the workforce (Nurtanto et al., 2020).

Life skills refer to the broad range of abilities that individuals use to handle the demands and challenges of everyday life. These skills are central to individuals' ability to make decisions, solve problems, and engage effectively with others. As the World Health Organization (WHO) defines, life skills include decision-making, problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, empathy, self-awareness, and coping with stress (WHO, 2022). These fundamental abilities are essential for personal development and well-being, allowing individuals to lead fulfilling lives, maintain positive relationships, and manage the pressures that come with the challenges of modern life. Life skills, in this regard, are not just a set of practical abilities; they are essential for emotional, cognitive, and social growth (Sarıgoz, 2022).

The World Health Organization's 2022 report on life skills emphasized that individuals must have the ability to adapt and think critically in order to navigate the complexities of contemporary society. In addition to cognitive competencies, life skills also encompass emotional intelligence—such as self-regulation and empathy—which plays a significant role in fostering healthy relationships and improving social interactions. In an increasingly fast-paced world, individuals must be equipped with the tools necessary for effective communication, conflict resolution, and emotional management, all of which contribute to overall life satisfaction and the ability to thrive both personally and professionally (Sarıgoz, 2022).

Moreover, Sarıgoz posits that career skills are equally critical in preparing students for success in the workforce. As economies become more knowledge-based and globalized, the demand for individuals with soft skills—skills related to managing oneself and interacting effectively with others—has risen dramatically. These skills are not only important for performing specific job tasks but are also essential for contributing positively to the workplace environment, collaborating effectively with others, and managing challenges. Career skills include adaptability, initiative, communication, leadership, teamwork, and time management.

In today's job market, employers increasingly value soft skills over technical skills. As the nature of work continues to evolve, it is no longer sufficient for individuals to possess only technical expertise. The P21 Framework for 21st Century Skills, widely recognized in educational circles, underscores the importance of life and career skills, noting that today's work environments require individuals to not only think critically and creatively but also be able to navigate complex, cross-cultural settings and work collaboratively in diverse teams (Nurtanto et al., 2020). Effective career preparation, therefore, requires a balance between subject-specific knowledge and the development of soft skills that enhance interpersonal interactions and decision-making abilities (Sulam et al., 2019).

Adaptability, for example, is a key skill in the modern workplace. The capacity to respond effectively to change and uncertainty is crucial for both personal and professional success. As global markets shift and new technologies emerge, individuals must be able to adjust their thinking and behaviors to meet new demands. The ability to be flexible and adaptable in the workplace can help individuals stay relevant in their professions while also contributing to their emotional resilience and overall well-being. One effective way to cultivate adaptability is through feedback loops in educational settings, where students are encouraged to use feedback not just as a corrective measure but as a tool for growth and improvement. By adapting to new strategies and learning from feedback, students can become more flexible in their approach to challenges (Sulam et al., 2019).

Educational systems play a crucial role in the development of life and career skills. The integration of life skills into the curriculum is essential for ensuring that students are well-prepared for the challenges they will face in their personal and professional lives. Various studies have shown that teaching life skills as part of a formal education curriculum has a positive impact on students' emotional intelligence, social competence, and overall career readiness (Sarıgoz, 2022). Activities such as role-playing, case studies, group discussions, and simulations allow students to practice critical life skills in a controlled environment, making them more confident and capable in real-world situations (Sulam et al., 2019).

In addition to practical exercises, schools must also emphasize emotional learning and self-awareness to help students understand their strengths and weaknesses. Self-awareness and self-regulation are crucial life skills that allow individuals to manage their emotions, set realistic goals, and respond to stress in healthy ways. These competencies are essential for creating a balanced and fulfilling life, which in turn enhances career prospects. Moreover, developing emotional intelligence helps individuals build strong interpersonal relationships, resolve conflicts effectively, and create a positive work environment, all of which are crucial elements of career success (Sulam et al., 2019).

Another essential component of career skill development, according to Sulam et al., is the promotion of leadership and responsibility. Leadership skills enable individuals to influence others, make decisions that contribute to organizational goals, and inspire positive change. Whether in formal leadership roles or as members of a team, individuals with strong leadership skills can guide and motivate others to achieve common objectives. In their research, Sulam et al. emphasize that leadership is not just about dir

ecting others but also about fostering a culture of collaboration, accountability, and empowerment. Through educational activities, students can be encouraged to take on leadership roles, manage projects, and develop their capacity to inspire and guide others in achieving collective goals.

As the world continues to become more connected, the ability to navigate digital spaces and engage in global networks has become an increasingly important career skill. In addition to the fundamental life skills of decision-making and problem-solving, individuals must also develop the ability to collaborate across cultural boundaries, interact in virtual environments, and leverage digital tools effectively. The P21 Framework stresses the importance of digital literacy and cross-cultural communication in preparing students for success in the 21st century. In a globally connected world, understanding and respecting cultural differences, along with having the ability to communicate effectively in diverse contexts, is a key driver of success (Nurtanto et al., 2020).

To succeed in this digital age, individuals must also develop critical thinking skills. The ability to analyze information, evaluate sources, and make decisions based on evidence is increasingly important in the workplace and in daily life. As technology continues to shape the way we communicate, work, and learn, individuals with strong critical thinking skills will be better equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern world. By encouraging students to engage with real-world problems and challenge assumptions, educators can help them develop the skills necessary to think critically and make informed decisions (Nurtanto et al., 2020; Jindal-Snape et al., 2022).

The need for global citizenship and intercultural communication has become particularly prominent. The globalized economy demands that individuals possess cultural sensitivity and the ability to collaborate across geographic boundaries. It emphasizes the importance of cross-cultural competence, noting that the ability to navigate different cultural contexts is essential for personal and professional success in a globalized world (Jindal-Snape et al., 2022).

The Method

This section presents the procedure for gathering data to answer the problem and test the hypotheses. Specifically, it describes the following: research design, study setting, research respondents, sampling technique, research instrument, validity and reliability of the instrument, categorization of variables and system of scoring, data gathering procedure, statistical treatment of data, and ethical considerations.

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. This method involves taking independent measurements of two variables in order to analyze their statistical relationship (Canonizado, 2021). In this design, information is initially gathered without altering the environment. It involves a one-time interaction with the variables in question, indicating the extent to which two or more variables fluctuate in tandem. This design can evaluate variables in real-world circumstances without controlling or manipulating them and test hypotheses about particular relationships.

The Results

This study investigated the assessment of 21st century skills in Social Science courses among college students. Through a descriptive-correlational design, the study analyzed student characteristics, assessed their levels of 21st century skills, and explored the relationships between these skills and demographic factors. The results provide valuable insights that can inform curriculum development and pedagogical strategies in higher education.

The study revealed that the majority of respondents were young, female, and single, which is consistent

with general enrollment trends in many higher education institutions. Additionally, most students came from families where parents had attained education up to the high school level, with moderate household incomes and larger family sizes. These demographic factors can significantly influence students' educational experiences, aspirations, and access to learning resources. The presence of larger household sizes suggests potential financial constraints, which could impact students' ability to access digital tools necessary for enhancing their 21st century skills.

One of the most significant findings was the students' overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward Social Sciences. This enthusiasm indicates an inherent interest in the field, which could be leveraged to further develop critical skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration. Institutions can capitalize on this engagement by integrating more interactive and real-world applications of Social Sciences into the curriculum.

The study found that students demonstrated the highest proficiency in life and career skills. These skills are crucial for employability and professional success. The strong performance in this domain suggests that students are well-prepared for real-world challenges outside the academic setting.

However, a significant gap was observed in information, media, and technology skills. Given the increasing reliance on digital tools and media in both academic and professional settings, this gap highlights a critical area for improvement. A lack of proficiency in this domain may limit students' ability to effectively analyze media content, utilize digital research tools, and engage in online collaborations. This finding underscores the need for enhanced digital literacy programs and technology-integrated learning approaches within Social Sciences curricula.

The study also examined how demographic factors influenced the development of 21st Century Skills. One of the key findings was the correlation between sex and attitudes toward Social Sciences, suggesting that gender-based preferences and experiences shape students' engagement with the discipline. Understanding these variations can inform targeted interventions that cater to diverse learning needs and preferences.

For instance, if female students exhibit a stronger affinity for Social Sciences, educators could design inclusive teaching strategies that maintains engagement while encouraging male students to develop a greater appreciation for the subject. Additionally, fostering gender-sensitive environments may contribute to more balanced participation across the Social Sciences.

Overall, this study provides crucial insights into the assessment of 21st Century Skills in Social Science courses among college students. While students exhibit strong competencies in life and career skills, their limited proficiency in information, media, and technology skills highlights an area for urgent improvement. The significance of sex and attitudes toward social science in skill development highlights how gender and perception shape learning. Only these two are statistically significant, emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive teaching and fostering positive views of Social Science.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the majority of the students assessed are 23 years old and below, female, single, with parents whose highest educational attainment is high school graduate, from families earning ₱15,000 and below monthly, and with 4–6 siblings. Very positive attitude towards Social Science, reinforcing the importance of engagement and interest in the discipline.

Moreover, college students in Social Science courses demonstrated Very High overall proficiency, particularly in life and career skills. The highest-rated aspects of these skills include resilience in facing

uncertainty, adaptability to shifting priorities, and openness to feedback as a tool for continuous growth and improvement. These attributes are critical for success in an ever-changing professional and personal landscape.

Notably, students' exposure to real-world responsibilities has further strengthened their life and career skills, making them more adaptable, proactive, and resilient. This emphasizes the need to strengthen the curriculum and implement innovative teaching approaches that integrate real-life applications of these skills. By doing so, students can be better equipped to navigate the challenges of both academic and professional life in an increasingly dynamic world.

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