#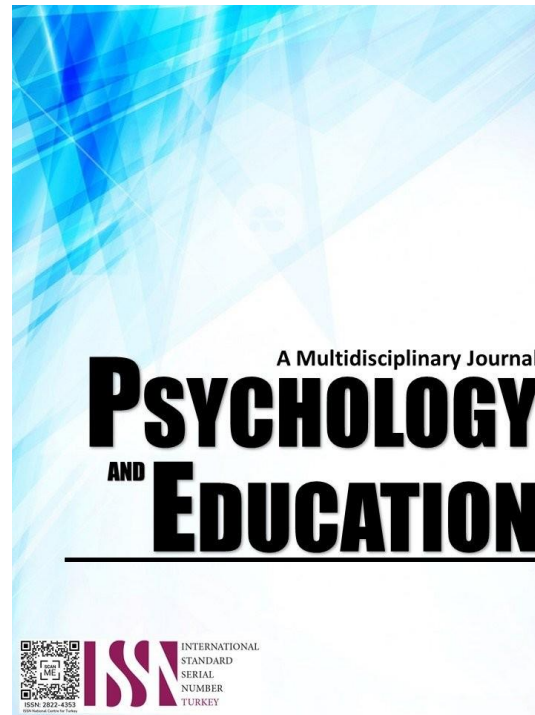 SELF-DETERMINATION AND ACADEMIC PERSISTENCE AMONG ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM STUDENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM ENRICHMENT

Self-Determination and Academic Persistence among Alternative Learning System Students: Implications for Program Enrichment

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Abstract

Education is a critical determinant of student success; however, numerous factors hinder degree completion among some Filipinos. In this context, 'non-traditional students' encompass out-of-school children, youth, and adults. This demographic exhibits an elevated dropout risk compared to other students. Specifically, in Lipa City, only 89.42% of non-traditional students complete their programs, with a dropout rate of 10.58%, which prompted the conduct of the present study. Using a correlational research design, this study investigates the correlation between self-determination and academic persistence among non-traditional students. Survey instruments, including a demographic data form, the Self-Determination Student Scale, and the Academic Persistence Scale, were administered to 150 randomly selected participants. Findings indicate high levels of self-determination and academic persistence, with a positive correlation between the two variables: as self-determination increases, so does academic persistence. However, the sub-factor of relatedness within self-determination scored moderately, as did the implementation subscale of academic persistence. These results highlight the need for collaborative efforts from teachers, the Department of Education, and other stakeholders to enhance interpersonal skills and persistence among non-traditional students, thereby improving completion rates. The study recommends that mobile teachers support students in developing time management skills and organizing team-building activities to foster peer socialization. Future research should explore additional factors influencing academic persistence and employ diverse research designs to obtain more comprehensive data beyond the scope of correlational studies.

Keywords: *academic persistence, non-traditional students, self-determination*

Introduction

Education is a powerful tool transcending age, background, and circumstances (Mandela, 2003, as cited in Tariq, 2020); however, not everyone is fortunate enough to complete their degrees. Several students take a break from formal education for internal and external reasons such as financial constraints, balancing work and family obligations, time limitations, and lack of support networks. Still, despite these challenges, some students strive to pursue their studies even though they have stopped for years (Tenorio, 2019). These students are referred to as the 'non-traditional students. They are defined as those learners who put a hold on their education for personal reasons, and then returned to complete their schooling (Treinienė, 2017). Their characteristics may include lack of personal interest in school, delayed enrollment by a year or more, having impoverished parents, having more responsibilities than their spouse, being a single parent, working full time while enrolled, or not receiving a high school diploma (Radford et al., 2015).

Presently, the population of non-traditional students is increasing (Wyatt, 2011, as cited in Nob & Nuñez, 2018). These students are at a higher risk of dropping out than traditional students (Cotton et al., 2017). In the Philippine context, the non-traditional students were referred to as the out-of-school children and youth (OSCY) and out-of-school youth and adults (OSYA). According to The Borgen Project report released in 2019, the Philippines had the highest dropout rate among countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with 6.38% among elementary students and 7.82% among secondary school students. However, given the adverse impact the pandemic crisis had towards the country, the number of out-of-school youth rose from 16.9% in January 2020 to 25.2% three months later in April 2020 (Bautista, 2022). Dropping out is a serious problem because it denies individual students their fundamental human right to education (Orion et al., 2014).

Having said this, the national and local governments, in collaboration with the Department of Education (DepEd), bear the obligation to extend opportunities for education, not only to the children and youth of the present, but also to those unfortunate out-of-school youth and adults who were unable to obtain sufficient formal education during the earlier years of their lives. The DepEd implements non-formal education programs through the Alternative Learning System or ALS (Atuel, 2013). The ALS program is a parallel learning system with a practical option for the formal instruction of Filipino out-of-school children, youth, and adults (OSCYAs).

Specifically, in Lipa City, Batangas, the ALS face many challenges and problems with its implementation. In SY. 2017-2018, 851 enrolled in the Alternative Learning System in the Division of Lipa. Of this, only 761 or 89.42% completed the program. Despite the many completers, 90 students, or 10.58%, did not persist (Tenorio, 2019). Their academic persistence was correlated with social support from parents and friends, positive self-beliefs, and a comfortable learning environment (Gloria & Ho, 2003, as cited in Santos & Koo, n.d.). Given the students' seemingly inconsistent self-determination and persistence in completing their education, the present study sought to determine the relationship between their levels of self-determination and academic persistence.

Self-determination, in particular, is a psychological construct that pertains to volitional activities undertaken by people based on their own will, and self-determined behavior results from deliberate, conscious choices, and decisions (Shogren et al., 2017). Self-determined

students were more likely to establish challenging goals in the face of difficulties, and efficiently manage their time and resources. These factors can all contribute to success in school (Chen, 2013). On the other hand, academic persistence is the capacity of a student to continue pursuing their goals in their studies despite the challenges (Alabed, 2023).

Therefore, because of the abovementioned problems, this research aimed to determine whether self-determination has a significant relationship with academic persistence. This study is relevant to society since the Philippines has the highest dropout rate among countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Consequently, understanding and assessing the role of self-determination in academic persistence among non-traditional students is crucial because it can provide valuable insights into the motivational factors that contribute to their ability to stay committed to their educational goals.

This study focused on non-traditional students, specifically the Alternative Learning System (ALS) students in Lipa City, Batangas. Since there is an increasing number of non-traditional students, this study aimed to determine the level of self-determination and academic persistence among ALS students.

Research Questions

The study aimed to assess the levels, and investigate the relationship between self-determination and academic persistence among non-traditional students in Lipa City, Batangas. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents, in terms of:
    1.1. age;
    1.2. sex;
    1.3. civil status; and
    1.4. socio-economic status?
2. What is the level of self-determination of the respondents in terms of:
    2.1. autonomy;
    2.2. competence; and
    2.3. relatedness?
3. What is the level of academic persistence of the respondents in terms of:
    3.1. ambition;
    3.2. determination;
    3.3. planning;
    3.4. implementation;
    3.5. recurrence; and
    3.6. self-discipline?
4. Is there a significant difference on the assessment of respondents when grouped according to their profile in terms of:
    4.1. self-determination; and
    4.2. academic persistence?
5. Is there a significant statistical relationship between self-determination and academic persistence among non-traditional students?
6. How may the findings be utilized in proposing an enhancement program?

Literature Review

Self-Determination

Self-determination is a psychological construct that refers to voluntary activities undertaken by people based on their own will, and self-determined behavior results from deliberate, conscious choices and decisions. It can also be defined as the capacity to choose and to have choices – to be the determinants of one's action (Shogren et al., 2017). In addition, it contributes to maintaining clarity and focus, enabling people to establish specific goals and actively pursue them (Alabed, 2023).

Deci and Ryan (1985, as cited in Deci & Ryan, 2017) developed the Self-Determination Theory, which states that goal-directed behaviors are driven by three innate psychological needs of self-determination: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy is the ability observed among people who need to feel in control of their behaviors and goals. Those who can fulfill their desire are considered independent and capable of making decisions. Feelings of autonomy are enhanced when individuals are given a choice to govern their behaviors and have their sentiments acknowledged by others. On another note, competence, the second component of self-determination, is the term used to describe a person who has the necessary qualities to perform a task or make judgments, use skills, and exhibit strength. It is the capacity and assurance to finish a task successfully (Sieck, 2021).

Pardede and Kovac (2023) stated that people are more likely to engage in things they feel competent in and would offer them a sense of accomplishment. Finally, relatedness is the capacity to feel a sense of both attachment to other people and a sense of belonging amongst other people. It entails having a sense of attachment to and belongingness within social organizations and other individuals. Self-determination can be challenging for those without connections to others because they might not have access to support and

assistance.

Academic Persistence

Persistence is the voluntary continuation of a goal-directed action despite obstacles, difficulties, or discouragement (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, as cited in Dean, 2023). It is the willingness to continue despite failures (Alabed, 2023). In the learning process, persistence is also evident and very crucial for students. In line with this, academic persistence has been conceptualized as a behavioral commitment to one's studies (Roland et al., 2016). It is the capacity of a student to pursue their study goals despite potential hurdles. It is the ability to continue putting in effort, even in the face of difficulty, when it looks like they are not progressing, or when things are not going according to plan. Academic persistence can be challenging, especially when a student experiences setbacks or failures. Through persistence, they learn from their mistakes, improve their strategies, and ultimately succeed (Alabed, 2023).

Self-Determination and Academic Persistence

According to Kaur (2017), although self-determination is an important element in predicting the persistence of the students, failure to achieve the basic needs of self-determination, autonomy, competence, and relatedness may lead to a student dropping out of school. In line with this, Handel et al. (2020) found evidence that shows how lack of interaction with peers and teachers is a key problem. It has not only affected the motivation and emotions of the individuals, but it also greatly impacted students' success of learning.

Vallerand et al. (1997, as cited in Ricard & Pelletier, 2016) posited that self-determination and academic persistence have a significant positive relationship. Specifically, their research developed a motivational model of high school dropouts that asserted how teachers', parents', and the school administration's behaviors toward students influence students' perceptions of competence and autonomy. The less autonomy-supportive the social agents' behaviors are, the less positive the students' views of competence and autonomy are. In turn, the less positive students' perceptions are, the lower their levels of self-determined school motivation are. Finally, a lack of self-determined motivation caused students to establish intentions to leave high school, which they eventually carried out, resulting in actual dropout behavior and ending academic persistence. These findings also aligned with high school dropout literature, which the researchers deemed relevant to their study since their respondents were non-traditional students and were mostly dropout students.

Similarly, Villareal and Garcia (2016) concluded in their study that higher levels of self-determination lead to increased academic persistence. In particular, their study established a significant positive relationship between self-determination, mainly autonomy, and academic persistence. It was further emphasized that promoting self-determined motivation in students, specifically autonomy support and interpersonal involvement, should be prioritized in educational endeavors because this will increase the student's academic persistence. When significant adults, most notably teachers, and parents, are involved with students in an autonomy-supportive way, the students will be more likely to retain their natural curiosity and have the best chance of creating the types of educational contexts that support conceptual understanding, flexible problem solving, personal adjustment, and social responsibility. The more that students' motivation is autonomous, the better they perform academically, persist longer, learn better, become more satisfied with their learning, and have more pleasant feelings at school. Naturally, parents and teachers who support students' autonomy (as well as other psychological needs) can encourage autonomous motivation (Guay, 2022).

Methodology

Research Design

The researchers utilized a quantitative descriptive correlational research design. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research design describes the steps involved in gathering, evaluating, interpreting, and reporting research findings. It was implemented with the objective collection and evaluation of numerical data via surveys and questionnaires. On the other hand, correlation is a statistical association or relationship between variables (Warner, 2013). The present study also employed a survey questionnaire to collect the necessary data to assess the hypothesis. Surveys generalize a sample to derive quantitative information on attitudes and views held by a larger group of people (Creswell, 2014). The researchers were able to gather the respondents' self-determination level and academic persistence among ALS students in the City of Lipa.

Respondents

The respondents of the study were the non-traditional students of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) students of the Districts in Lipa City for the academic year 2023-2024. The ALS students were the chosen participants because they were defined as the 'group at high risk' among those kinds of students enrolled (Tenorio, 2019). The researchers utilized random sampling as the most appropriate method to obtain the respondents for the present study. Random sampling is a probability sampling strategy where researchers randomly select a subset of a population and in this sampling method, each population member has an equal chance of being chosen. This technique is the most straightforward of all the probability sampling methods since it only allows a single random selection and requires little advance knowledge about the population (Thomas, 2020).

The researchers also utilized G*Power to test the statistical strength of the study and to determine the minimum sample size needed. By performing an Exact Correlation: Bivariate normal model statistical test, with an effect size of 0.30, a significance level of 0.05, and a statistical power of 0.95, the suggested sample size is 138. To account for potential discrepancies, response withdrawals, and

outliers, data were collected from 150 respondents.

Instruments

Self-Determination was measured using the Self-Determination Student Scale-Short Form (SDSS-SF), a standardized questionnaire. All 43 items in the SDSS-SF were taken directly from the 92-item Self-Determination Student Scale (SDSS) developed by Field and Hoffman (1994). This scale measured students' affective (feelings, emotions) and cognitive (beliefs) aspects of self-determination. There were five components of individual characteristics that contribute to self-determination: (I) Know Yourself and Your Context, (II) Value Yourself, (III) Plan, (IV) Act, and (V) Experience Outcomes and Learn. The KYYC and EOL were the factors associated with the basic psychological need, Competence. While the VY and P were the factors for Autonomy, and lastly, the A is for Relatedness. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 (Almost never like me) with a verbal interpretation of Very Low and a mean value of 1.00-1.79, then 2 (Occasionally like me) with a verbal interpretation of Low and a mean value of 1.80-2.59, then 3 (Moderately like me) with a verbal interpretation of Moderate and a mean value of 2.60-3.39, then 4 (Quite a bit like me) with a verbal interpretation of High and a mean value of 3.40-4.19, and last is 5 (Almost always like me) with a verbal interpretation of Very High and a mean value of 4.20-5.00. This scale has an excellent internal consistency reliability at $\alpha = 0.94$.

To measure the academic persistence of the respondents, the researchers adapted and modified the Motivational Persistence Scale (MPS) which is a standardized questionnaire developed by Constantin et al. (2011). The researchers had asked for permission from the author of the Motivational Persistence Scale to use and modify it to fit the present study's variables. In total, there were 30 items in the modified scale, mirroring the same number for the original version. Afterwards, the researchers named it the Academic Persistence Scale and then asked three Subject Matter Experts to validate the scale. After the validation, the scale was translated into Filipino. They were then pilot-tested to ensure the translations' correctness. Specifically, the reliability result of the Academic Persistence Scale was .93.

The scale was answered on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating "Very Little Extent" and 5 indicating "Very Large Extent." The verbal interpretation of this 5-point Likert Scale is Very Low in 1 (Very Little Extent) with a mean value of 1.00-1.79; Low in 2 (Little Extent) with a mean value of 1.80-2.59; Moderate in 3 (Average) with a mean value of 2.60-3.39; High in 4 (Large Extent) with a mean value of 3.40-4.19; and Very High in 5 (Very Large Extent) with a mean value of 4.20-5.00. This scale ensured the identification of six factors: ambition (setting ambitious goals); determination (pursuing long-term goals); planning (preparation of daily activities); implementation (realization of daily tasks); recurrence (re-actualization of unachieved goals); and self-discipline (monitoring and self-restraint).

Procedure

The researchers sought the permission of their research adviser, research instructor, and college dean. Afterwards, the researchers prepared the necessary documents, such as the formal letters and informed consent, which were signed and approved. The letters, accompanied by the research questionnaires, were addressed and sent to the Schools Division Superintendent of the Department of Education Lipa City to ask for their permission and approval to conduct the study involving their students. The researchers prepared Filipino-translated survey questionnaires to ensure a better understanding of the respondents. Specifically, they sought the help of a Filipino teacher to translate the questionnaires from English to Filipino; then, they were back-translated to ensure their correctness. The questionnaires were then pilot-tested to 68 College of Education and Liberal Arts students who were not respondents to the study but possessed similar characteristics to their study's sample, to check whether or not adjustments in the translation of the items needed to be made. After having finalized the translated questionnaires, they were printed out and handed to the respondents in person because the researchers gathered the data through the paper-and-pencil administration survey. Before the respondents started answering, the researchers briefed them. They made sure to ask them if they wanted to participate in the data gathering. Still, in the questionnaires the researchers handed out, the informed consent stating that respondents may either agree to participate or not, was provided. Upon obtaining permission, the researchers worked collaboratively with the Alternative Learning System mobile teachers to help them encourage the students to answer the survey. The researchers garnered 150 respondents from different locations in Lipa City. After accumulating the needed data, the researchers hired a statistician to compute the numerical data. However, the researchers were the ones who explained what these statistics signified verbally.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Jamovi version 2.3.18 were utilized for the statistical analysis of the present study. To ensure the reliability of the analyses and its interpretations, the researchers made use of (1) frequency, which presented the actual distribution of the respondents' demographic profile in frequency format; (2) percentage, which determined the relative position of the respondents; (3) ranking, which is the ordinal number of a value that was arranged in a specified order; (4) weighted mean, which is a measure of central tendency indicating the calculated average of the data; (5) Pearson correlation coefficient, which measured the statistical relationship or association between two continuous variables; (6) Shapiro-Wilk test of normality, which assessed whether the data was normally distributed or not; and, (7) Kruskal-Wallis test, which was used to determine the significant differences among the groups of respondents in terms of the academic persistence subscales. These statistical techniques were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents, the level of self-determination, and the level of academic persistence among the non-traditional

students in Lipa City. They were also used to determine whether or not there was a significant relationship between the variables of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were prioritized in dealing with the respondents. The researchers guaranteed that the rights of the respondents were valued and respected. Before the researchers distributed the questionnaire in person, they briefed the respondents and explained the informed consent whereby the respondents' right to withdraw were speculated. The researchers assured that there was no coercion of participation, and that everything that would take place was voluntary. More importantly, they assured that possible withdrawal would not bear any repercussions or consequences. The contact details of the researchers were also provided so the respondents of the study could reach out for any queries or clarifications regarding the study and their participation. Also, since the data gathering was conducted in person, the respondents could reach out or call the attention of the researchers for any questions, and they would be entertained in an instant. In accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, which aimed to protect all types of information, whether private, personal, or confidential, the researchers kept their anonymity and the confidentiality of the information gathered from them. They also enjoy the right to privacy, which allows them to withhold information they do not want to share, such as their names. Finally, the researchers informed the respondents that their data were only to be used for the study's purpose and would only be accessed by the researchers themselves. After conducting the research study, the data was properly discarded.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. *Demographic Profile of the Respondents*

Demographic Profile	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Age			
12-18	61	41%	2
19-40	81	54%	1
41-65	8	5%	3
Total	150	100%	
Gender			
Male	111	74%	1
Female	39	26%	2
Total	150	100%	
Civil Status			
Single	138	92%	1
Married	12	8%	2
Total	150	100%	
Socio-Economic Status			
Low-Income Class	127	84.7%	1
Middle-Income Class	23	15.3%	2
Total	150	100%	

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. Based on the results, a total of 150 respondents participated in this study. Most of them are 19-40 years old, with a frequency count of 81 and a corresponding percentage of 54%. Sixty-one respondents are 12-18 years old (rank 2), making up 41% of the sample. Lastly, only eight respondents (5%) belong to the age group of 41-65 years old. The basis for these age range is Paul Baltes' Periods of Human Development for adolescence, early adulthood, and late adulthood development.

Meanwhile, the table also illustrates that majority of the respondents are male, as attested by a frequency count of 111 and a total percentage of 74%. On the other hand, there are 39 female respondents, comprising 26% of the sample. In terms of civil status, most of the respondents are still single, with a frequency count of 138 and a corresponding percentage of 92%. Meanwhile, 12 respondents or 8% of the sample, are already married. It is important to note that 'widow/separated' was one of the options provided in the questionnaire under civil status; evidently, none of the respondents belonged to this group.

Lastly, in terms of socioeconomic status, a greater portion of the respondents belong to the low-income class, with a frequency count of 127 and a total percentage of 84.7%. Meanwhile, 23 respondents or 15.3% of the sample, disclosed that they belong to the middle-income class. Though included as an option in the questionnaire, none belonged to the high-income class.

Table 2.1 shows the Alternative Learning System (ALS) students' level of self-determination in terms of autonomy. Respondents generally perceived that the indicators presented above are quite a bit like them, as attested by a grand mean of 3.61, which was verbally interpreted as "high." Specifically, they believe personal hygiene is important to them, which garnered the highest weighted mean of 4.66 and was verbally interpreted as "very high." Similarly, indicators such as "Goals give my life direction,"; "Before I do something, I think about what might happen,"; "I imagine myself being successful," and "I can figure out how to get something if I want it" were all verbally interpreted as "very high" and garnered weighted means of 4.44, 4.38, 4.28 and 4.24, respectively. Because ALS students believe that their goals give their life a sense of direction and that they know how to figure out how to get something they want, these

solidify how autonomous and self-driven they are, possessing a strong sense of purpose. It was then stressed by Sokol et al. (2013) that to be autonomous means to act with a full sense of willingness, a sense of self-worth, and a clear sense of personal goals and direction. They also noted that people with very low levels of autonomy tend to pressure themselves to act to prove their worth to themselves and others. Considering the situation and past experiences of the ALS students, they truly possess a high level of autonomy in light of the results of the present study.

Table 2.1. *Level of Self-Determination of the Respondents in terms of Autonomy*

Indicators	WM	VI	R
2. I have the right to decide what I want to do.	3.73	High	10
3. When I do not get something, I want, I try a new approach.	3.68	High	11
8. I can figure out how to get something if I want it	4.24	Very High	5
17. I am unhappy with who I am.	2.03	Low	16
18. My life has no direction.	1.71	Very Low	17
19. I think about what is good for me when I do things.	4.19	High	6
20. Before I do something, I think about what might happen.	4.38	Very High	3
21. My friends are lucky to know me.	3.56	High	12
22. I know what grades I am working toward in my classes.	2.56	Low	14
24. In an argument, I am responsible for how I act on my feelings.	3.53	High	13
25. I like who I am.	4.12	High	9
26. Goals give my life direction.	4.44	Very High	2
27. I imagine myself being successful.	4.28	Very High	4
28. Personal hygiene is important to me.	4.66	Very High	1
34. I do not participate in school activities because I have nothing to contribute.	2.05	Low	15
40. Before I give a report in class, I go over it in my mind.	4.13	High	8
43. Before starting a part-time job or extracurricular activity, I think about how it might affect my schoolwork.	4.18	High	7
Composite Mean	3.61	High	

Meanwhile, the "My life has no direction" indicator got the lowest weighted mean of 1.71 and was verbally interpreted as "very low." This interpretation meant that the students never felt like their life had no direction. In line with this, the indicator "I am unhappy with who I am" got the second lowest weighted mean of 2.03 and was verbally interpreted as "low." This is where the students need more improvement. However, the results are not too alarming because it was shown that they occasionally felt unhappy with who they were. In an autonomy context, expressing dissatisfaction or unhappiness with who they are might indicate a struggle with self-acceptance. Considering the situation of the ALS students, it is valid to feel that way because of their experiences; however, if this feeling of lack of contentment will not be resolved, it is not impossible that they will no longer be self-determined anymore. According to Garrido (2023), an individual lacks autonomy, particularly when they feel threatened or dominated by others, or must operate according to deadlines.

Table 2.2. *Level of Self-Determination of the Respondents in terms of Competence*

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. I know what is important to me.	4.01	High	10
4. To help me the next time, I evaluate how things turned out.	4.17	High	6
5. There are no interesting possibilities in my future.	2.06	Low	15
6. Nothing is important to me.	1.77	Very Low	16
7. I can be successful even though I have weaknesses	4.33	Very High	3
11. I know my strengths.	4.06	High	9
12. I dream about what my life will be like after I finish school.	4.38	Very High	2
15. I think about how I could have done some things better.	3.90	High	11
23. It is important for me to know what I do well in being a good friend.	4.07	High	7.5
29. I make changes to improve my relationship with my family.	4.53	Very High	1
31. I know what is important when choosing my friends.	3.81	High	12
32. I could not describe my strengths and weaknesses in school.	3.07	Moderate	13
33. At the end of the marking period, I compare my grades to those I expected.	2.41	Low	14
37. I like it when my friends see me do well.	4.25	Very High	4
39. I think about how well I did something.	4.21	Very High	5
41. I feel proud when I succeed.	4.07	High	7.5
Composite Mean	3.69	High	

Table 2.2 displays the respondents' level of self-determination in terms of competence. It can be gleaned that being competent is "quite a bit like them," which has a verbal interpretation of "high," as attested by a grand mean of 3.69. The first to third highest indicator in this table suggests that ALS students are confident in looking forward to what their lives will be like after they finish school. A competent individual often has clear goals and a vision for the future, and the respondents possess this characteristic. In addition, the respondents acknowledged their weaknesses but focused on their strengths, demonstrating resilience and a belief in their abilities to succeed despite limitations. It shows how competent they are as students. It is important to highlight this given that non-traditional

students are the ones who significantly face more challenges. Adams et al. (2017) emphasized that an individual's need for competence reflects a human's desire to master their environment effectively and experience a sense of competence. The feeling of mastery is a sense that one can succeed and grow (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

On the other hand, the indicator "Nothing is important to me" got the lowest weighted mean of 1.77 and was verbally interpreted as "very low". As this was scored the lowest, this implies that the respondents never felt that anything was unimportant to them, which is a positive statement. Feeling that nothing is important might lead to disengagement and a lack of motivation and it shows that the respondents of the survey are competent.

Table 2.3. *Level of Self-Determination of the Respondents in terms of Relatedness*

Indicators	WM	VI	R
9. Sometimes I need to take risks.	3.85	High	2
10. My weaknesses stop me from being successful	2.63	Moderate	9.5
13. I tell others what I want.	2.91	Moderate	7
14. If I want something, I keep at it.	3.54	High	6
16. I prefer to negotiate rather than to demand or give in.	2.63	Moderate	9.5
30. If I need help with a school project, I can figure out where to get it.	3.78	High	3
35. I tell my friends what I want to do when we go out.	2.87	Moderate	8
36. When I am angry with my friends, I talk with them about it.	3.70	High	4
38. I know how to get help when I need it.	3.57	High	5
42. When I want good grades, I work until I get them.	4.37	Very High	1
Composite Mean	3.38	Moderate	

Table 2.3 depicts the respondents' level of self-determination in terms of relatedness. As shown, respondents perceived having relatedness is moderately like them, as attested by a grand mean of 3.38 and a verbal interpretation of "Moderate." Specifically, when they want good grades, they work until they get them, which garnered the highest weighted mean of 4.37 and a verbal interpretation of "very high." Meanwhile, indicators such as "Sometimes I need to take risks"; "If I need help with a school project, I can figure out where to get it."; "When I am angry with my friends, I talk with them about it."; "I know how to get help when I need it."; and "If I want something, I keep at it" were verbally interpreted as "high" and obtained weighted means between 3.40-4.19. The respondents' ages ranged from 12 to 65 years old, so garnering a 'moderately like me' result is not surprising. Some students face difficulties in interacting with their peers or teachers, resulting in isolation. According to Martin et al. (2018), relatedness is the most difficult need to satisfy, especially when there is a large distance learning course size – having two to three days of classes per week, and only spending three hours in class. In addition to isolation, feelings of rejection or only being accepted based on meeting certain conditions weaken relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Regarding the indicators such as "My weaknesses stop me from being successful" and "I prefer to negotiate rather than to demand or give in", both got the same weighted mean of 2.63, the lowest weighted mean obtained among the group. They were verbally interpreted as "moderate". Despite the respondents' high scores in the previous indicators, some were still lacking relatedness; although these scores are not alarming, they were still acknowledged as the lowest. In relation to this, rivalry with others and outside criticism can disintegrate a person's sense of relatedness. Feeling excluded or criticized can make it difficult to feel a sense of relatedness. In the classroom, relatedness is deeply associated with a student's perception that the teacher expresses sincere affection, and respects and values them. Students who report such relatedness are more likely to exhibit identified and integrated regulation for the arduous tasks involved in learning. In contrast, those who feel disconnected or rejected by teachers are more likely to move away from internalization and thus, respond only to external contingencies and controls (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009, as cited in Korpershoek et al., 2020).

Table 3 shows the respondents' level of academic persistence. The students were discovered to be persistent across different subscales and at varying frequencies. It can be gleaned that the highest assessed subscale among all the six subscales is Self-discipline, which garnered a composite mean of 3.96 with a verbal interpretation of "high." They are the type of individuals who are convinced that their most important achievements occur because of discipline and persistence. This explains why the item "Through discipline, I have achieved my most important academic goals in life" garnered the highest weighted mean of 4.55. According to Dansu (2023), discipline becomes very crucial for non-traditional students who manage multiple responsibilities. Their persistence, ability to adhere to their schedules and to prioritize tasks, contribute significantly to achieving their academic goals.

The subscale which scored the lowest was the implementation, with a composite mean of 3.38 and a verbal interpretation of 'moderate.' The highest indicator under this subscale is the students' persistence in completing their daily academic objectives. On the other hand, the lowest indicator under this subscale was: "I consistently meet deadlines in the submission of academic tasks," garnering a mean of 1.81. The respondents are known to be non-traditional students. Naturally, they have unique circumstances that may prevent them from meeting deadlines, such as raising their own families, working, or undergoing financial difficulties. They exhibit a variety of characteristics, so their needs and goals would obviously differ (Maroon, 2020). Several possible factors contributing to the students' low persistence levels are lack of time management, lack of finances, and lack of family support. Evidently, this could be an area of improvement for the respondents of the study.

Table 3. *Level of Academic Persistence of the Respondents*

Subscales Of Academic Persistence	WM	VI	R
Ambition			
1. I set simple academic goals for myself.	2.07	Low	5
7. I am motivated by challenges because I see them as opportunities to learn and grow.	4.56	Very High	1
13. I do not feel the need to prove myself academically.	3.77	High	3
19. I consider myself an ambitious person when it comes to my studies.	3.23	Moderate	4
25. I always expect more from myself and from my future.	4.24	Very High	2
Composite Mean	3.57	High	
Determination			
2. I give more importance on short-term rewards over long-term academic goals.	3.38	Moderate	4
8. Long-term academic goals motivate me to overcome day-to-day school workloads.	4.31	Very High	1
14. I devote time and effort in academic projects that require months of patience and hard work.	4.27	Very High	3
20. I am dedicated to completing academic activities, even if they take a long time to finish.	4.31	Very High	1
26. I prefer to set shorter-term academic goals, as I find it easier to stay motivated.	2.87	Moderate	5
Composite Mean	3.83	High	
Planning			
3. I write down my daily/weekly plans for my studies in advance.	3.49	High	5
9. I always check my to-do list every morning before I get to school.	3.60	High	4
15. I create agenda to plan my daily academic tasks and responsibilities.	3.89	High	2
21. I plan in detail the tasks and activities I need to do the next day.	4.06	High	1
27. I regularly update my list of academic goals that I will achieve in the future.	3.81	High	3
Composite Mean	3.77	High	
Implementation			
4. I consistently meet deadlines in the submission of academic tasks.	1.81	Low	5
10. Some days, I slack off on my academic work.	3.35	Moderate	3
16. Once I have set my mind on an academic goal, I make sure to see it through until its completion.	4.31	Very High	2
22. I sometimes do not follow through on my academic commitments	3.05	Moderate	4
28. I am persistent in completing my daily academic objectives.	4.38	Very High	1
Composite Mean	3.38	Moderate	
Recurrence			
5. I often regret on the missed opportunities I had in the past and how I could have used them in my academic journey.	4.21	Very High	1
11. I find myself still thinking about the academic goals I gave up on.	3.57	HIgh	4
17. I am overwhelmed thinking about my unfulfilled academic commitments.	3.39	Moderate	3
23. I find it hard to put an important academic project behind me, in favor of other priorities.	3.15	Moderate	5
29. I keep thinking about my unfinished projects/ assignment.	3.89	High	2
Composite Mean	3.64	High	
Self-Discipline			
6. I demonstrate a great sense of discipline at school.	4.40	Very High	2
12. I commit to my responsibilities, even in times of academic challenges.	4.08	High	3
18. I consistently maintain my academic tasks well-organized, even when it's not necessary.	3.74	High	4
24. I usually exceed my self-imposed limits [for example: on shopping, food, time, etc.	3.03	Moderate	5
30. Through discipline, I have achieved my most important academic goals in life.	4.55	Very High	1
Composite Mean	3.96	High	
Grand Mean	3.69	High	

Table 4.1 presents the statistical differences between the respondents regarding self-determination when grouped according to their profiles. When respondents are grouped according to their age, it shows a significant difference in autonomy, $F=10.18$, p-value = .006 (less than 0.05); competence, $F=7.24$, p-value = .027 (less than 0.05); and relatedness, $F=6.62$, p-value = .007 (less than 0.05); thus, rejecting the null hypothesis. This shows that the variations in the respondents' autonomy, competence, and relatedness as indicators of self-determination can be attributed to the variation in age groups. The age range of the study reflected Baltes' periods of human development, and it was shown in the table that the self-determination of respondents varies according to their age group. According to Oga-Baldwin and Fryer (2020), self-determination is evident throughout different stages of a person's life, from childhood to adulthood. Their study proved that individuals differ in self-determination even at a young age. The present study can be further supported by Summers et al. (2014), as their findings indicated that young children remain dependent upon others for caregiving and support. Hence, they are not developmentally ready to act self-determinedly, fundamentally due to a lack of maturity, experience, and overall capabilities.

However, no significant difference in any of the indicators of self-determination was found when they were grouped according to gender, civil status, and socio-economic status, as attested by p-values that were all greater than 0.05, thus accepting the null hypotheses.

Table 4.1. *Test of Difference of Respondents' Level of Self-Determination when Grouped according to Profile*

ANOVA (Parametric Test)	f-value	p-value	Decision & Interpretation
Age			
Relatedness	6.62	.007	Reject Ho; Significant Difference
Kruskal-Wallis Test	t-value	p-value	Decision & Interpretation
Autonomy	10.18	.006	Reject Ho; Significant Difference
Competence	7.24	.027	Reject Ho; Significant Difference
Independent Sample T-test	t-value	p-value	Decision & Interpretation
Gender			
Autonomy	1.579	.116	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Competence	.997	.320	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Relatedness	1.702	.140	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Civil Status			
Autonomy	.629	.530	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Competence	.799	.426	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Relatedness	.405	.686	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Socio-Economic Status			
Autonomy	1.148	.253	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Competence	1.179	.240	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Relatedness	.952	.343	Accept Ho; Not Significant

Table 4.2. *Test of Difference of Respondents' Level of Academic Persistence when Grouped according to Profile*

ANOVA (Parametric Test)	f-value	p-value	Decision & Interpretation
Age			
Ambition	.588	.565	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Recurrence	5.916	.008	Reject Ho; Significant Difference
Self-Discipline	.503	.612	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Kruskal-Wallis Test	t-value	p-value	Decision & Interpretation
Determination	.383	.826	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Planning	3.908	.142	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Implementation	.604	.739	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Independent Sample T-test	t-value	p-value	Decision & Interpretation
Gender			
Ambition	2154	.966	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Determination	1884	.225	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Planning	1804	.121	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Implementation	-1.01	.314	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Recurrence	1816	.134	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Self-Discipline	1.54	.126	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Civil Status			
Ambition	679	.297	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Determination	827	.994	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Planning	629	.166	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Implementation	807	.883	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Recurrence	762	.519	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Self-Discipline	762	.645	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Socio-Economic Status			
Ambition	1341	.531	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Determination	1180	.141	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Planning	1365	.619	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Implementation	-.779	.437	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Recurrence	.956	.341	Accept Ho; Not Significant
Self-Discipline	1086	.049	Reject Ho; Significant Difference

Table 4.2 displays the statistical difference of the respondents in academic persistence when grouped according to their profile. When respondents are grouped according to age, it shows a significant difference in recurrence, f-value = 5.916, p-value = .008 (less than 0.05), thus rejecting the null hypothesis. This shows that the variation of the respondents in recurrence as a subscale of academic persistence can be attributed to the variation in age groups. Scheibe et al. (2007, as cited in Sahrani et al., 2014) cited Paul Baltes' Lifespan Theory of Human Development discussion on the recurrence of individuals as they grow older. As individuals move through life, they increasingly realize that many goals either cannot be pursued, can be reached only partly, or require disengagement. This only proves that recurrence truly differs by age.

On the other hand, when respondents are grouped according to their socio-economic status, it shows a significant difference in self-discipline, t-value = 1086, p-value = .049 (less than 0.05), thus rejecting the null hypothesis. This depicts that the variations in the respondents' self-discipline can be attributed to the variation in socioeconomic status. This was supported by the study of Destin et al. (2019) that claimed how students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds show persistent advantage in academic outcomes over students of lower socioeconomic status. The root causes of inequality likely drive this socioeconomic gap.

To reiterate, no significant differences were observed in the academic persistence of the respondents in terms of their gender and civil status as attested by p-values that were all greater than 0.05, thus accepting the null hypothesis.

Table 5. *Relationship between the Respondents' Level of Academic Persistence and Self-Determination*

		Academic Persistence	*Ambition*	*Determination*	*Planning*	*Implementation*	*Recurrence*	*Self-Discipline*
Self-Determination	Pearson's r	0.429	0.187	0.189	0.455	0.039	0.354	0.134
	p-value	< .001	0.022	0.020	< .001	0.637	< .001	0.102
	Verbal interpretation	Moderate/Highly Significant	Very Weak/Significant	Very Weak/Significant	Moderate/Highly Significant	Very Weak/ Not Significant	Weak/Highly Significant	Very Weak/ Not Significant
Autonomy	Pearson's r	0.437	0.184	0.197	0.470	0.028	0.306	0.214
	p-value	< .001	0.024	0.016	< .001	0.737	< .001	0.009
	Verbal interpretation	Moderate /Highly Significant	Very Weak/Significant	Very Weak/Significant	Moderate /Highly Significant	Very Weak/ Not Significant	Weak/Highly Significant	Very Weak/Very Significant
Competence	Pearson's r	0.454	0.221	0.218	0.471	0.137	0.318	0.112
	p-value	< .001	0.007	0.007	< .001	0.094	< .001	0.173
	Verbal interpretation	Moderate /Highly Significant	Weak/Very Significant	Weak/Very Significant	Moderate/Highly Significant	Very Weak/ Not Significant	Weak/Highly Significant	Very Weak/Significant
Relatedness	Pearson's r	0.274	0.145	0.087	0.282	-0.052	0.321	0.041
	p-value	< .001	0.077	0.288	< .001	0.531	< .001	0.616
	Verbal interpretation	Weak/Highly Significant	Very Weak/Not Significant	Very Weak/Not Significant	Weak/Highly Significant	Very Weak/Not Significant	Weak/Highly Significant	Very Weak/Not Significant

Based on the results, there is a positive relationship between the students' self-determination and academic persistence, as attested by a correlation coefficient of 0.429. This only means that as the level self-determination increases, there is also an increase in the level of academic persistence of the respondents. A p-value of .001, which is lower than 0.05, indicates that the relationship between the two variables, is highly significant. As the level of self-determination of the Alternative Learning System students increases, their academic persistence also increases.

This result is aligned with the theoretical framework of the study: the Self-Determination Theory by Ryan and Deci. Applied to the context of ALS students, this theory would suggest that students who feel a sense of autonomy and control over their learning, feel competent in their abilities and feel connected to others in the learning environment. Thus, they may be more likely to persist academically. Deci et al. (1991, as cited in Villareal & Garcia, 2016) utilized this theory in one of their studies and suggested that higher levels of self-determination lead to increased academic persistence. In line with this, one study was conducted to test the correlation between self-determination and academic persistence of dropout students, and Vallerand et al. (1997, as cited in Ricard & Pelletier, 2016) indicated in their study that there is a significant positive relationship between self-determination and academic persistence and they are particularly focused on dropout students. In particular, non-self-determined students tend to drop out of school because it was reported that those students do not have the three basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Conclusion

The present study has the majority of the respondents which belong to the age group of 19 to 40 years old and most of them are male, single, and belong to the low-income class. The result showed that the respondents exhibit a high level of self-determination in terms of autonomy and competence. However, in terms of relatedness, it is considered moderate, implying respondents having possible difficulties in socializing with others. In terms of academic persistence, respondents generally possess a high level. Through the subscale discipline, which scored the highest among the subscales, they would be able to achieve their most important academic goals. Nonetheless, there are instances when the students demonstrate inconsistency in meeting their deadlines for academic tasks, as they scored moderately in the implementation subscale of academic persistence. On the other hand, when grouped according to profile, there is a statistically significant difference in the levels of self-determination, including the three basic psychological needs, with respect to age. Additionally, when grouped according to profile, the level of academic persistence in terms of recurrence shows a statistical difference in age, while the level of academic persistence in terms of self-discipline reveals a statistical difference in socio-economic status. The present study found a positive relationship between the level of self-determination and academic persistence of ALS students. Evidently, as self-determination increases, academic persistence will also increase. However, when sub-factors and subscales were correlated, some, specifically relatedness, self-discipline, and implementation, showed a very weak or non-significant relationship, while the remaining factors were highly significant. While these scores are not alarming, there are areas that require

improvement in terms of learning and activities with their peers. Hence, an enhancement program will be proposed.

It is recommended that the mobile teachers or the Department of Education itself may identify the areas where the students feel unhappy, and plan activities or programs that will help them reflect and see that their life has purpose. Additionally, to address the students' doubts about their future, the Department of Education may hold a Career Development workshop showcasing jobs that the ALS students may apply for. Lastly, they may organize team-building activities to increase students' socialization with their peers. As self-determination was assessed based on age, the researchers suggest that the concerned body reinforces a differentiated instruction/learning approach tailored to the age group of students. This study also recommends the future researchers to use a larger sample. Alternatively, it would be beneficial if future researchers considered collecting data on ALS students across the entire province of Batangas. The result of the present study can also be a basis for future researchers to conduct similar studies and may explore other factors influencing academic persistence. Additionally, alternative research designs, such as qualitative research, may be considered to gather in-depth data that correlational research designs cannot provide. Lastly, the researchers proposed an enhancement program to address the self-determination's sub-factor of relatedness. Team-building activities are suggested to empower connections and foster bonds among ALS students which focuses on improving social connectedness, as the present study revealed difficulties in socializing. On the other hand, for the academic persistence's subscale of implementation, the program aims to enhance the ALS students' time management, study techniques, and goal-setting skills. Support networks and mentoring/tutoring programs may also be considered to encourage students to seek assistance when facing challenges in their academic tasks.

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