



## Developing a model for life skills training through the enhancement of academic, personal, social, and career competencies for middle school students

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### Abstract

The objective of this research is to develop a model for life skills training through the strengthening of academic, personal, social, and career competencies for middle school students. We designed this model to equip students with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of life's challenges. Design-Based Research (DBR) serves as a research methodology, encompassing four stages: identification and analysis of practical problems, solution design, iterative testing cycles and solution refinement, reflection, and producing the final design. Validation testing of the model was conducted with four experts, including one developmental guidance and counseling specialist, one developmental psychologist, one adolescent psychologist, one curriculum and learning specialist, and eight guidance and counseling teachers or practitioners. The results of expert and practitioner validation indicate that the life skills training model is worthy of further experimentation to develop student's life skills. Recommendations for future research emphasize the importance of developing new skills or competencies for the younger generation and educators to address the challenges and dynamics of the digital era. Globalization and societal shifts toward digitally automated services underscore the need for teacher preparation in imparting life skills that not only adhere to conventional norms but also integrate technological skills into student education.

**Keywords:** Competencies, Learning, Life skill, Middle school, Model, Students, Training.

**Citation** | Hafina, A., Rusmana, N., Hamzah, R. M., Irawan, T. M. I. A., & Mulyati, S. (2024). Developing a model for life skills training through the enhancement of academic, personal, social, and career competencies for middle school students. *Journal of Education and E-Learning Research*, 11(3), 481–489. 10.20448/jeelr.v11i3.5847

#### History:

Received: 10 November 2023

Revised: 15 April 2024

Accepted: 3 May 2024

Published: 25 July 2024

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**Publisher:** Asian Online Journal Publishing Group

**Funding:** This research is supported by Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (Grant number: 535/UN40/PT.01.02/2023).

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The Ethical Committee of the Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia has granted approval for this study on 14 March 2023 (Ref. No. 554/UN40.LP/PT.01.03/2023).

**Transparency:** The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

**Competing Interests:** The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

**Authors' Contributions:** All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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### **Contribution of this paper to the literature**

This study yielded the development of a structured framework for life skills training, predicated upon academic, personal, social, and career competencies, tailored for Middle School. This model is structured based on relevant competency standards, methods, and techniques.

## **1. Introduction**

The current era of globalization and technological advancement has brought forth various impacts on the world economy, particularly in the service industry (Wells, 2018). Additionally, intense competition and rapid job transformations pose challenges for individuals to develop the necessary skills for employment (Hirschi, 2018). Individuals with low life skills tend to face unemployment and lower income levels (OECD, 2017). This is attributed to a lack of education and training, rendering them incapable of competing in the global market (Mikulec & Guimarães, 2022).

Schools, as formal educational institutions, play a crucial role in training, developing, and optimizing students' life skills for both professional and societal engagement. The guidance and counseling services within schools can serve as a systematic, logical, and sustainable effort conducted by counselors to facilitate the development of learners towards achieving autonomy and fostering optimal growth (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Green & Keys, 2001; McMahan, Mason, & Paisley, 2009). The optimization of student development within guidance and counseling services based on life skills encompasses the academic, personal, social, and career domains. The primary task of guidance counselors is to provide services through basic service components, responsive services, individual planning, and system support (Whiston & Sexton, 1998). Basic services equip students with knowledge about normal growth and development, promote positive personal growth, and assist students in acquiring and utilizing skills needed in everyday life. Responsive services encompass all responses to sudden individual needs or concerns that arise. We individual planning services to guide all students in developing personal, social, learning, and career plans (ASCA, 2012). Therefore, in carrying out their duties, guidance and counseling teachers need to have guidelines for the implementation of these services, with one of the most critical services being developmental in nature.

The cultivation of life skills stands as an imperative facet for individuals to flourish and attain pinnacle achievements across academic pursuits, personal domains, and professional trajectories. These proficiencies encompass a multifaceted array, including leadership, problem-solving acumen, creativity, adept time management, resilience, entrepreneurial acumen, effective communication, emotional regulation, empathetic engagement, learning agility, research proficiency, ethical comportment, negotiation prowess, attentive listening, adaptability to dynamic shifts, sound decision-making, and adept collaboration within team dynamics (Abu, Alzboon, Alkhalaleh, Alshurafat, & Al Amosh, 2023; Akimov et al., 2023; Cronin et al., 2022; Ronkainen, Aggerholm, Allen-Collinson, & Ryba, 2023; Tsiligiris & Bowyer, 2021). In consonance with these dimensions, the National Education Association (2010) delineates four quintessential learning competencies requisite for 21st-century mastery, commonly referred to as the 'Four Cs': (1) critical thinking and problem-solving; (2) effective communication; (3) collaborative prowess; and (4) fostering creativity and innovative ideation. Furthermore, the Battelle for Kids Partnership 21 (P21) Model's stratifies contemporary competencies into three overarching domains: (1) learning and innovation skills; (2) information, media, and technology proficiencies; and (3) life and career competencies. Learning and innovation skills encompass facets such as creativity, critical thinking, proficient communication, and adept collaboration. Information, media, and technology proficiencies encompass competencies such as information literacy, media literacy, and ICT literacy. Life and career competencies encompass adaptability, self-direction, productivity, responsibility, and leadership acumen (Battelle for Kids, 2019).

Based on the crucial importance of life skills education as an effort to equip individuals with knowledge, life values, and appropriate skills to face the challenges of globalization, as previously elucidated, the objective of this research is to develop a Life Skills Training Model through the Enhancement of Academic, Social, Personal, and Career Competencies. This model is proposed as a solution to optimize the learning of life skills that align with the developmental tasks, especially for middle school students.

## **2. Methodology**

The research methodology employed is Design-Based Research (DBR). The stages of this research encompass the identification and analysis of practical problems, solution design, iterative testing cycles, solution refinement, reflection, and design production (McKenney & Reeves, 2013). The model assessment involves four experts, including one developmental guidance and counseling specialist, one developmental psychologist, one adolescent psychologist, one curriculum and learning specialist, and eight guidance and counseling teachers or practitioners. The criteria for selecting experts and practitioners are as follows: (1) lecturers, teachers, and/or practitioners with a minimum of five years of relevant work experience; (2) possessing insights, knowledge, and expertise in guidance and counseling, developmental psychology, adolescent psychology, curriculum, and learning.

The instruments used to assess the model include the following aspects: (1) title formulation; (2) clarity of terminology usage; (3) display design; (4) concept of life skills; (5) concept of group exercises; (6) formulation of model components consisting of rationale, objectives, scope, basic assumptions, targets, intervention procedures, evaluation, and success indicators; (7) life skills training model matrix; (8) guidance and counseling service implementation plan covering initial, transition, work, and termination stages; (9) materials; (10) daily activity journals; and the concept of changes assessment. Assessment is conducted using a Likert scale with five points, scored as follows: 5 = Excellent, 4 = Good, 3 = Fair, 2 = Less satisfactory and requires improvement, and 1 = Unsatisfactory. The researcher also records comments to evaluate the model. After the assessment by experts and practitioners, the data is analyzed using V Aiken to determine the model's validity.

### 3. Result

We conducted a preliminary study to identify and analyze practical problems related to life skills training, refining the examination. The findings from this preliminary study served as the foundation for the development plan for the life skills training model. We obtained source materials, data, or information from scientific journals, reference books, and publications that supported the research. Based on the results of the preliminary study, several challenges encountered by guidance and counseling teachers have been identified, such as the lack of optimal ability in planning (Fitri, Hidayat, & Hartati, 2019) and conducting guidance and counseling programs (Nurrahmi, 2015). Additionally, the research by Lestari and Effendi (2017) revealed that some guidance and counseling teachers still develop counseling programs without considering the students' needs but rather rely on their past experiences. This has led to inaccuracies in creating materials that are not suitable for the students. Despite having different needs, the material provided to students are often the same at each level. According to ASCA (Rusmana, 2021) there is a competency structure, but to equip it, there needs to be a material structure for the development of academic, personal, social, and career competencies. Textbooks and course materials are crucial components for the success of education (Yuliastini, Dharma, Giri, & Dartiningsih, 2020).

Furthermore, Sagone, De Caroli, Falanga, and Indiana (2020) suggest specific training or education, such as using a narrative approach with stories, life books, and metaphors, to strengthen life skills. This educational training can develop resilience and self-efficacy in life skills, both in the school context and in daily life. The research by Ekornes and Øye (2022) identifies four main areas to be addressed in improving life skills, including: (1) teaching about life skills topics, (2) providing emotional support, (3) enhancing relational competence, and (4) facilitating mastery experiences. Ekornes and Øye (2022) explain that the enhancement of life skills in schools not only involves teaching life skills topics but also providing emotional support and facilitating positive relationships, social inclusion, and mastery experiences.

Model of Life Skills Training through the strengthening of academic, social, personal, and career competencies is a solution to optimize the learning of life skills, especially for middle school (SMP) students. The reference books used in the research and development of the Life Skills Model are based on the American School Counselor Association Standards (Rusmana, 2021). Based on the National Standards for Students issued by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) in 2002, there are three domains developed, including the academic domain-learning to learn, the career/vocational domain-learning to earn, and the personal/social domain-learning to live. Meanwhile, the method and technique of the model in developing teaching materials use group exercises, referring to the book "Group Counseling: Strategies and Skills" by Jacobs, Masson, Harvill, and Schimmel (2012). There are fourteen types of group exercise methods or techniques integrated into the implementation of the model, namely: (1) Written exercises; (2) Movement exercises; (3) Rounds; (4) Dyad and Triad; (5) Creative props; (6) Arts and crafts; (7) Fantasy exercises; (8) Common reading exercises; (9) Feedback exercise; (10) Trust exercise; (11) Experiential exercises; (12) Moral dilemma exercises; (13) Group decision exercises; and (14) Touching exercises. The core stages of model development use the implementation reference of guidance and counseling according to Gladding (1999) which includes four main steps in conducting counseling, namely: (1) the beginning stage; (2) the transition stage; (3) the working stage; and (4) the termination stage. According to Gladding (1999) the four counseling steps he presents align with the group dynamics steps of Tuckman, namely forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

The second stage is the Designing Solutions (concept mapping) phase. The solution planning refers to the data collection and identification results from the preliminary study. Subsequently, the researcher refines the planning, develops the model, and formulates and creates in its entirety. In an effort to refine the model design, the researcher conducts a Forum Group Discussion (FGD) with experts and practitioners in Guidance and Counseling and Curriculum Learning. The activities carried out by the researcher to design and develop the model include: (1) identifying the formulation of competencies and references for model development; (2) conducting a Review of Prior Literature (RPL) for model development; (3) focusing on refining the matrix that includes competency formulations, indicators, materials, and techniques in the group exercise used; and (4) subsequently creating a complete draft of the model. The skills developed in the life skills training model focus on academic, personal, social, and career competencies for middle school students. The Operational Program Structure for the Implementation of Life Skills Training Based on Group Exercise consists of several main components, including rationale, objectives, scope, basic assumptions, targets, program implementation procedures, and evaluation.

The preliminary study's data collection and identification results inform the design of the training model. Subsequently, the researcher engages in the planning and development of the model, culminating in its formulation and creation as a whole. The researcher creates a matrix for the training model to serve as a reference in its development. The researchers establishes this matrix by outlining the basic competencies, determining appropriate methods and techniques, specifying material topics, and allocating time for instruction. After the creation of the matrix, the researcher proceeds with the development of the Review of Prior Literature (RPL) framework and daily journals. Tables 1, 2, and 3 provide an example of the matrix for the life skills model at the middle school level.

Table 1. Class VII competency model.

Code	Class VII basic competencies	Material topics	Group exercise technique	Time
A1.7.3	Use time management techniques in doing school assignments	The beauty of an organized life	Dyadand tryad	2 x 40 minutes
A1.7.4	Able to collaborate effectively with various people regardless of race, religion and culture	Blind trust walk	Trust	2 x 40 minutes
A3.7.11	Apply critical thinking and decision-making skills in academic and personal domains	Pass through the spider's web hole without touching the web	Experiential	2 x 40 minutes
C5.7.18	Be aware of the availability of various	Alumni success stories	Common	2 x 40

Code	Class VII basic competencies	Material topics	Group exercise technique	Time
	opportunities to continue to secondary school		reading	minutes
C5.7.19	Be aware of multiple job classifications	Job classification	Round	2 x 40 minutes
C6.7.22	Explore several educational and employment alternatives that are related to your interests and values	My dream	Written	2 x 40 minutes
P/S7.7.27	Identify interests, skills and personal strengths	Analyze myself	Written	2 x 40 minutes
P/S7.7.29	Recognize the role their values and beliefs play in the design of competency standards	The importance of tolerance	Moral dilemma	2 x 40 minutes
P/S9.7.33	Demonstrate effective conflict resolution techniques	Teenage conflicts	Moral dilemma	2 x 40 minutes

Table 2. Class VIII competency model.

Code	Class VIII basic competencies	Material topics	Group exercise technique	Time
A1.8.1	Apply time management and task management skills	Determine your priorities	<i>Art and craft</i>	2 x 40 minutes
A2.8.8	Illustrate the ability to work together in a group to make group decisions	Putting together a puzzle	Group decision	2 x 40 minutes
A3.8.11	Choose school and community activities that align with future interests	School and community activities	Written	2 x 40 minutes
C4.8.16	Considering career options developed based on a review of career interests	Looking for career opportunities according to personal interests	Written	2 x 40 minutes
C4.8.17	Investigate career options through an interview with someone working in the chosen field	W career interview	Experiential	2 x 40 minutes
C6.8.21	Understanding examples of stereotyping around roles and gender in work	Gender roles in work	Feedback	2 x 40 minutes
P/S7.8.27	Playing an assertive role in responding to real life situations that may be experienced with friends	Building true friendships	<i>Fantasy</i>	2 x 40 minutes
P/S8.8.34	Understand the importance of designing and realizing the goals you want to achieve	Strategy and motivation for achieving goals	Moral dilemma	2 x 40 minutes
P/S9.8.36	Demonstrate responsible behavior as a school member	My responsibilities as a student	Moral dilemma	2 x 40 minutes
P/S9.8.37	Recognize the signs of stress and understand how to reduce it	Symptoms of stress and how to reduce it	Movement: Drawing feelings	2 x 40 minutes

Table 3. Class IX competency model.

Code	Basic competencies for class IX (3) first level middle school	Material topics	Group exercise technique	Time
A1.9.1	Know the procedures that must be followed to get help from a counselor	Procedures for utilizing BK services to optimize self-development	Dyad and triad	2 x 40 minutes
A1.9.2	Review various ways to manage study time	Study time management tips	Written	2 x 40 minutes
A2.9.8	Be aware of graduation requirements, high school course credit weights, class attendance policies and school rules	Get to know about secondary high school	Movement	2 x 40 minutes
A2.9.11	Apply the study skills needed to achieve success in school	Effective learning strategies	Movement	2 x 40 minutes
C5.9.20	Review reference sources for career information used in classes VII and VIII	Explore career information	Common reading	2 x 40 minutes
C5.9.21	Recognize the usefulness of administering standardized tests and other assessments in personal planning	Recognize psychological tests as a tool to understand one's potential	Common reading	2 x 40 minutes
C5.9.23	Develop a career planning portfolio	Lifelong career planning	Written	2 x 40 minutes
C6.9.26	Describes various ways to develop work skills that can be acquired through free time activities and school	Sharpen work skills	Feedback	2 x 40 minutes
P/S7.9.29	Aware of the impact of cooperative efforts	Cooperation and solidarity in life	Experiential	2 x 40 minutes
P/S7.9.30	Maintain open communication between school and home by consistently delivering all materials and messages	Effective communication	Experiential	2 x 40 minutes
P/S8.9.38	Identify times when peer pressure can influence decisions	Tips for making decisions	Trust	2 x 40 minutes
P/S9.9.43	Know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate physical contact	Social etiquette	Moral dilemma	2 x 40 minutes
P/S9.9.45	Recognize forms of peer pressure	STOP! bullying behavior	Moral dilemma	2 x 40 minutes

Based on the above explanation, operationally, the life skills training model is designed using a group approach that includes four main steps: (1) the beginning stage; (2) the transition stage; (3) the working stage; and (4) the



termination stage (Gladding, 1999). In the working stage, the teaching process employs four core steps of the Socratic method: (1) Experience; (2) Identify; (3) Analyze; and (4) Generalize. The Experience phase, also known as the action phase, is where the teacher facilitates learning activities aimed at encouraging students to express their movements that lead to the characters present in each game according to the predetermined scenario. The identify phase involves the teacher guiding the process of identification and reflection on experiences during the learning process. During this phase, the teacher encourages students or group members to engage in introspection and discern the relationship between the game process and the character or attitude that should emerge. Students are encouraged to express thoughts and feelings related to the experiential process. The Analyze phase is where students are guided to reflect and think about the connection between the game and the emotional conditions they experienced. We use this reflection to develop a plan to address personal weaknesses. The Generalize phase is where students are guided to create a plan for improvement regarding the weaknesses they face. You can implement the improvement plan in other games or future learning activities.

In the third stage, the researcher conduct a recurring cycle of testing and refinement, repeatedly conducting a series of tests to refine the model's design. The researcher develops a draft hypothetical model and conducts validation tests to assess the model's feasibility before implementation. The hypothetical model developed includes the following: (1) title; (2) rationale; (3) scope of the problem; (4) objectives; (5) basic assumptions; (6) target intervention subjects; (7) intervention steps; (8) intervention strategy; (9) evaluation and success indicators; and (10) daily journals.

Subsequently, the results of the model development are validated by experts and practitioners in guidance and counseling through a Forum Group Discussion (FGD). Overall, the FGD results deem the matrix, model, and several examples of the service suitable for implementation. Some notes for improvement include: (1) operational indicators need to be created that cover all aspects; (2) strive to avoid using more than one method or technique in each activity; and (3) the need to refine the draft model.

Reflection to generate design and implementation principles is the final stage. This reflection involves discussions with experts in relevant fields, such as interviews and discussions with several professors of related courses. The ultimate objective of this research is to generate design principles for the model's development. Experts and practitioners conduct model validation tests to assess the model's feasibility. The model validation test is given to four experts, including one developmental guidance and counseling expert, one developmental psychology expert, one adolescent psychology expert, one curriculum and learning expert, and eight guidance and counseling teachers or practitioners. We conduct the assessment using the above-described model validation instrument. The model feasibility test using the model validation instrument.

**Table 4.** Results of model feasibility testing among practitioners.

No	Aspect	Average expert rating	Average teacher ratings	Overall average grade	Information
1	Title formulation	4.8	4.4	4.6	Good
2	Clarity of use of terms	4.3	4.4	4.3	Good
3	Display design	4.3	4.4	4.3	Good
4	Life skills concept	4.5	4.4	4.4	Good
5	Group exercise concept	4.8	4.6	4.7	Good
6	Formulation of model components				
	a. Rational	4.5	4.4	4.4	Good
	b. Objective	4.8	4.5	4.6	Good
	c. Scope	4.3	4.5	4.4	Good
	d. Basic assumptions	4.5	4.5	4.5	Good
	e. Target	4.5	4.5	4.5	Good
	f. Intervention procedures	4.3	4.5	4.4	Good
	g. Evaluation and success indicators	4.5	4.5	4.5	Good
7	Life skills model grid	4.8	4.5	4.6	Good
8	Attachment				
	a. Service implementation plan (SIP)				
	1) Early stage	4.5	4.5	4.5	Good
	2) Transition stage	4.5	4.5	4.5	Good
	3) Work phase				
	a. Experimentation stage	4.5	4.5	4.5	Good
	b. Identification stage	4.5	4.5	4.5	Good
	c. Analysis stage	4.5	4.5	4.5	Good
	d. Generalization stage	4.5	4.5	4.5	Good
	4) Termination stage				
	a. Material	4.8	4.4	4.6	Good
	b. Instrument: Activity journal	4.3	4.5	4.4	Good
9	Changes assessment concept	4.8	4.5	4.6	Good
	Average	4.5	4.5	4.5	Good
	Percentage of achievement	90%	90%	90%	

The validation results show an average score of 4.55, a standard deviation of 0.10, and a percentage of 90%. With the average obtained, this can be categorized as good, indicating that the model is suitable for testing. However, the validator improvement notes recommend revising the model to use language that group members can understand more easily, particularly language suitable for middle school students. The model was tested with guidance and counseling teachers through Training of Trainers (ToT). We conduct the testing by utilizing the group exercise technique to practice various life skills training scenario. The researcher performed observations, interviews, and data collection through daily journals to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of model

implementation. Through the limited model trial, the visible impact of this research implementation was that teachers who were the subjects of the trial were able to learn, use, develop, and master various life skills practiced, such as developing communication skills, cooperation, mutual assistance, building trust, and more. Evaluation notes for improving model implementation include: (1) guidance and counseling teachers need to make thorough preparations for both tools and materials, adapted to the group exercise techniques used, and (2) guidance and counseling teachers need to pay attention to the number of group members in implementing group exercise techniques, to create dynamics and conducive conditions for group members to participate in activities. Based on the results of the field trial, the model was refined according to feedback and addressed deficiencies, ensuring that it met acceptability criteria. At this point, we produced a prototype model, prepared for limited scale dissemination.

Furthermore, in order to assess the suitability of the model for implementation, the researcher employed the V Aiken analysis test with 5 rating categories, as outlined by Aiken (1980) and Aiken (1985). The minimum standard set by V Aiken for the validity test of this model is 0.80 with a probability of 0.40. Table 5 presents the results of the V Aiken test for the developmental life skills model.

Table 5. V Aiken score average.

No	Aspect	V aiken
1	Title formulation	0.9
2	Clarity of use of terms	0.8
3	Display design	0.8
4	Life skills concept	0.9
5	Group exercise concept	0.9
6	Rational	0.9
7	Objective	0.9
8	Scope	0.8
9	Basic assumptions	0.9
10	Target	0.9
11	Intervention procedures	0.8
12	Evaluation and success indicators	0.9
13	Life skills model grid	0.9
14	Early stage	0.9
15	Transition stage	0.9
16	Experimentation stage	0.9
17	Identification stage	0.9
18	Analysis stage	0.9
19	Generalization stage	0.9
20	Material	0.9
21	Instrument: Activity journal	0.8
22	Changes assessment	0.9
Score average		0.9

As evident in Table 5, the mean score of the V Aiken is 0.9, surpassing the minimum validity score of 0.80 for the 5 rating categories. This implies that the model is deemed suitable for experimental trials with users.

#### 4. Discussion

Life skills education is an endeavor aimed at equipping individuals with the knowledge, values, and capabilities necessary to confront the challenges of globalization. These skills encompass risk-taking behaviors and the cultivation of abilities such as communication, assertiveness, self-awareness, decision-making, problem-solving, critical and creative thinking to safeguard individuals from abuse and exploitative violence (Bancin & Ambarita, 2019; Chusni, Saputro, Suranto, & Rahardjo, 2022; Giang, Khanh, Hong, & Le Hoa, 2022; Patra, 2022; Rusmana, Hafina, Siddik, & Nur, 2020; UNICEF, 2015; WHO, 1993).

Ekornes and Øye (2022) expand on the idea that developing life skills in schools involves more than just teaching relevant subjects. It also involves providing emotional support and helping students build healthy relationships with others, which leads to better social integration and the acquisition of mastery experiences. The OECD underscores the imperative for educational frameworks in the year 2030 to prioritize the enhancement of life skills within schools, underscoring the role of educational institutions not only in nurturing cognitive aptitudes but also in fortifying character development (OECD, 2018, 2021). Concurrently, the Swedish Education Act emphasizes the responsibility of schools to foster students' intellectual and personal growth, mandating the cultivation of knowledge and values alongside the encouragement of lifelong learning and holistic development (Rapp, 2022).

Guidance and Counseling teachers or counselors face various challenges in every era. The demand for competencies and skills to become an effective counselor continues to grow in line with the development of counseling (Sari, Sukma, & Rizqi, 2019). Counselors need to prepare themselves to be professional and competent over time through self-development, turning challenges into opportunities, and acquiring new skills to be well-prepared for any changes, particularly in the field of education and learning (Rakhmawati, 2017). Through these efforts to enhance and develop competencies, it is hoped that counselors can assist individuals or clients in achieving optimal soft skills.

The Life Skills Training Model through Strengthening Academic, Social, Personal, and Career Competencies is an instructional material aimed at developing life skills by enhancing the academic, personal, social, and career competencies of middle school students or equivalent. Firstly, in the academic domain (learning to learn), the objective is to assist the younger generation in choosing experiences that will enable them to develop decision-making skills, problem-solving, critical thinking, logical reasoning, designing competency standards, adaptability to technology, transition skills, interpersonal skills, and information organization and management skills. The goal

of this domain encompasses skills for learning, scholastic excellence, and academic success leading to life success. In the development of the academic domain, guidance and counseling teachers can help the younger generation choose suitable experiences that will enable them to overcome most learning situations they face (Bressman, Winter, & Efron, 2018; Gottfredson, 2005). Secondly, in the career or vocational domain (learning to earn), it includes developing positive attitudes towards work and acquiring skills that can help students transition positively from the school to work and from one position to another. Additional competency standards are also included, covering awareness of various career lifestyle options, occupational information, school and training provisions, and awareness of the relationship between these additional competency standards and work values, talents, interests, skills, and personality.

Career guidance serves as a pivotal tool aiding individuals or cohorts in contemplating aspirations and interests, fostering preparedness for further educational and professional pursuits, augmenting qualifications and performance capabilities, exploring vocational pathways, nurturing self-assurance, bolstering motivation and resilience towards objectives, optimizing leisure time utilization, implementing self-development strategies, and strategizing for future endeavors (Dodd, Hanson, & Hooley, 2022; Hooley, Sultana, & Thomsen, 2017; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2004; Radcliffe & Bos, 2013). Dodd et al. (2022) contend that an increased quantity and caliber of career guidance initiatives will engender heightened career readiness among the younger populace. Furthermore, career guidance has a profound influence on youth's vocational preparedness, with elevated participation rates correlating with enhanced levels of career readiness. Ngai et al. (2023) looked at the evidence and found that career interventions that include hands-on learning and deep engagement with relevant stakeholders in professional domains lead to big improvements in social well-being, especially when it comes to social integration, civic engagement, and community involvement. Grant, Springer, Tuttle, and Reno (2021) underscore the indispensable role of school counselors in nurturing the career development trajectory of students, advocating for the optimization of this service through the cultivation and fortification of relationships amongst stakeholders, including peers, educators, parents, and the wider community. Also, the personal or social domain (learning to live) includes many activities that help students develop their interpersonal skills with different people and groups. These activities are based on standards for student competency in areas like educational, vocational, and personal triumphs, self-awareness, and the cultivation of a robust positive self-concept. Research by Sagone, De Caroli, and Indiana (2018) indicates that adolescents' participation in life skills training targeting self-image and socio-relational competence correlates with heightened self-efficacy in managing adverse emotions and various facets of psychological well-being. Additionally, extant literature posits that life skills training yields tangible enhancements in quality of life, exerting positive influences on happiness, emotional regulation, self-assurance, accountability, mitigation of mental health symptoms, psychological well-being, and group social dynamics (Hajia, Mohammadkhani, & Hahtami, 2011; Nabors, Reynold, & Weist, 2000; Sobhi-Gharamaleki & Rajabi, 2010).

In this model, group exercises are the method and technique used in developing teaching materials. Group exercise is one of the methods in group counseling that is action-oriented, as it makes group members active, mobile, and dynamic. Jacobs et al. (2012) explain that there are at least seven reasons to use exercises in group settings: (1) to increase comfort levels; (2) to provide useful information to the group leader; (3) to stimulate discussion and focus the group; (4) to change focus; (5) to deepen concentrate; (6) to provide opportunities for experiential learning; and (7) to provide enjoyment and relaxation. Group exercises are experiential, offering an alternative way to explore issues beyond discussions, prompting group members to take action rather than just talk about them, and creating fun and relaxation through humor, laughter, and relaxation for group members.

Meldrum (2021) asserts that the group approach serves as an alternative to address the shortcomings of the individual approach. The group approach allows individuals to share issues with other group members, fosters cooperation rather than competition within the group, and encourages the group to take collective responsibility for decision-making, problem-solving, and adapting to change. Through this approach, individuals can leverage the group's members to sharpen their skills, as seen in Van Der Zanden, Denessen, Cillessen, and Meijer (2020) who conducted interviews on various teaching practices used to develop students' critical thinking skills, and Abrami et al. (2015) who implemented problem-solving practices through dialogues, simulations, and role-playing. In addition, Hafina, Nur, and Malik (2022) conducted research on traditional games based on the Socratic method, revealing that this game is suitable for use in elementary schools to build attitudes of tolerance, hard work, and responsibility. These are executed in various forms. These include questions posed by the teacher, whole-class discussion, and small group discussions.

## 5. Conclusion

Schools, as formal educational institutions, play a crucial role in building students' life skills capacity to cope with the complexities of life. Life skills education needs to be provided to students to equip them with the knowledge and skills required to navigate animation. The Life Skills Training Model through Strengthening Academic, Social, Personal, and Career Competencies for Middle school students has been developed based on competency standards, scope of materials, appropriate methods and techniques, and alignment with students' developmental tasks. The results of model development indicate that, in general, the grid, model, and several examples of Implementation Service Plans (SIP) that have been created are suitable and worthy of implementation. Some notes for improvement include: (1) operational indicators need to cover all aspects; (2) avoid using more than one method or technique in each activity; and (3) the need to refine the model draft. We anticipate that these improvements will enhance the effectiveness of the Life Skills Training Model's implementation and positively influence students' life skills development.

Future research endeavors should consider the necessity of developing new skills or competencies for the younger generation and educators to address the challenges and dynamics of the digital era. Globalization and the shift towards digitally-based automated services highlight the need for teacher preparation to impart life skills that are not only conventional but also integrate technological skills into students' learning. In line with the study by Ranta, Kruskopf, Kortessalmi, Kalmi, and Lonka (2022). Supporting the future readiness of teachers to teach life skills with an emphasis on digitalization is essential, covering skills related to work, entrepreneurship, and financial



literacy. Thus, this research provides a significant contribution in the context of curriculum development and education that responds to the demands of the times, equipping students with relevant life skills to navigate life's complexities.

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