

Assessing the Role of Family Functioning in Fostering Grade 12 Students' Resilience in The Academe

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Abstract:

This study examined the role of family functioning and resilience among one hundred fifty-four (154) Grade 12 students from a public senior high school, utilizing the **McMaster Family Functioning Theory** as the primary framework. The theory emphasizes seven (7) dimensions of family functioning: problem-solving, communication, roles, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, behavior control, and general functioning. Participants were selected through **proportionate stratified random sampling**. Results revealed that students generally perceived their family functioning as *mostly healthy*, except in the dimension of *affective involvement*. Notably, most respondents came from *low-income* families. Statistical analysis showed a **significant difference in family functioning based on family type**, but no significant difference when grouped according to family income. Furthermore, a **weak negative correlation** was found between family functioning and resilience, suggesting that while healthier family relationships tend to enhance resilience, other factors may also play a role.

A **thematic analysis** of qualitative responses identified key coping themes, including *open and healthy communication*, *optimism and determination*, *consistent family support*, and *faith* as effective resilience strategies. Additionally, *sense of interconnectedness* and *family as a source of motivation* emerged as vital family roles in fostering resilience. Overall, findings highlight that healthier family functioning contributes to stronger resilience among students. The study recommends the **institutionalization of guidance services** that strengthen parent-student linkages through homeroom learning sessions, alongside **psychoeducational workshops** for teachers and students to enhance less healthy family dimensions identified in this research.

Keywords: Family Functioning; Resilience; McMaster Family Functioning Theory; Affective Involvement; Communication; Family Support; Coping Strategies; Senior High School Students.

Introduction

An individual's personality and behavior are byproducts of the interactions with environment, biological inheritance, society, culture, and norms. In these perspectives, family is considered an integral element in examining, explaining, predicting, controlling, and understanding the behavior itself. For generations, the role of family has been embedded in Filipino culture as a sanctified unit reflecting solidarity, religiosity, respect, affection, and identity for each of its members, creating the very foundation of the community (Gozum, 2020).

According to Garabiles, Ofreneo, & Hall (2017), families developed resiliency as members shared responsibility in making ends meet, alleviating pressure through the sense of family involvement showing connectedness in addressing filial obligations and other concerns. It was evident during the global pandemic wherein families and parents played crucial parts in building character resilience among students, acting as a support system in maintaining healthy habits and routine (Baloyo & Trillanes, 2023).

Nonetheless, few studies focused on the capacity of family in resilience-building emerged in educational settings that were conducted to help students adapt and thrive against educational challenges, especially in public schools. Most importantly, this study explored the dynamics of families from the perspectives of Filipino students in an educational context and understood the strategies employed amidst the educational and economic crisis in the country to provide additional information about family health and resilience in the local scene.

Theoretical Background

This study was anchored on the McMaster Family Functioning theory by Nathan B. Epstein (1973) and the system theory of family resilience by Froma Walsh (1996).

With that, family functioning and resilience were viewed through the combined lenses of ecological and developmental perspectives. The past and present research puts paramount significance on family as an influential agent for socialization and other equally important facets of development like the formation of cultural values and future upbringing (Karkashadze, Kuprashvili, & Gugenshashvili, 2023). Also, family has been considered as one of the sources of resilience when talking about recovering in times of crisis, treatment and rehabilitation, and other forms of adverse conditions (Walsh, 1996, 2016).

On the other hand, Walsh (2016) suggested in the theory of family resilience that the transactional processes within the family capacitate its members to overcome stressors and develop adaptive mechanisms to minimize disruption within the family. It emphasized the potential of the members of the family to become more resilient, resourceful, and adaptive in the face of challenges as a functional unit. With that, the collaborative effort of members fortifies family mechanisms and strategies to anticipate and

respond to problems, dependability, effectiveness in mobilizing their resources, and most importantly, encouraging individual resilience amidst identified challenges. It is achieved because the family as a unit shares responsibility, empowering the members to look after one another and fostering self-esteem and social support that facilitate development to withstand difficulties (Herdiana, Suryanto & Handoyo, 2018).

Goals and Objectives

This study explored the following statements related to the students' family functioning and resilience:

1. What is the profile of students participating in this study?
 - 1.1. Sex;
 - 1.2. Strand;
 - 1.3. Type of family;
 - 1.4. Family income?
2. Is there a significant difference in students' level of family functioning in terms of profile?
3. Is there a significant relationship between students' family functioning and their level of resilience?
4. What coping strategies do families of resilient students employ to sustain their education amidst identified crisis events?

II. Methods/Design

Research Design

Applied in this study was a descriptive correlational design wherein the researcher tests the assumptions about the significant relationships and level of influence between the seven dimensions of family functioning and resiliency of students using descriptive statistics for the profiling and correlation analysis in testing the hypotheses.

Respondents of the Study

Based on the profile required in the tests utilized in this study, the respondents were Grade 12 senior high school students of a public school who voluntarily participated in the data gathering. The researcher calculated the targeted sample for each strand by dividing the total number of students per strand by the total population of Grade 12. As a result, the percentages were used to identify the number of students required from each strand to complete the 154 students needed for the assessment and data gathering. Below is the distribution of respondents per strand:

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents

Academic Strands	Sample Size	Percentage
HUMSS	31	20.12
ABM	38	24.68
STEM	51	33.12
TVL	34	22.08
Total	154	100

Source: 2nd Semester Schools Enrollment Database SY 2024 - 2025

Materials

The study utilized a researcher-made resilience scale and the adapted Family Assessment Device (FAD). Moreover, the following tests were adapted to measure the highlighted variables, family functioning and resilience. At the beginning of the test administration, students were encouraged to answer questions related to their demographic profile, which includes family type and income.

After the demographic profiling of the students, the tests were administered to the randomly selected participants to continue assessing their levels of family functioning and resilience. Accordingly, the Family Assessment Device (FAD) is a 60-item self-report assessment tool that measures the seven dimensions of family functioning based on the McMaster family functioning theory. These dimensions are problem-solving, roles, communication, affective involvement, affective responsiveness, behavior control, and general functioning. Epstein, Baldwin, and Bishop in 1983 created this specific test, operating on a 4-point Likert scale with options of strongly agree = 1, agree = 2, disagree = 3, and strongly disagree = 4.

Moreover, the resilience scale gauged the capacity of the students to withstand and recover in difficult times. Moreover, this test has twenty (20) items in total. Nonetheless, the researcher-made resilience scale was validated in a pilot test. A total of three (3) validators examined the results with expertise and licenses in guidance and counseling and psychometrics as fields of profession relevant to the study. It was found that the adapted Family Assessment Device and resilience scale yielded Cronbach's alphas of

0.75 and 0.79, respectively.

Validity of Instrument

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Data Gathering Procedure

Initially, the selected respondents were filtered on the criteria set by the researcher based on the objectives of the study. Moreover, the representative sample from the public school was randomized to avoid projecting biases in the data collection. Prior to this, an approval letter from the graduate school and the partner institution was secured and followed by the dissemination of consent/assent forms to the students ensuring awareness of the risks and benefits, rights as respondents, ethical guidelines, and approval of their guardians/parents for the voluntary participation. Thus, the data collection spearheaded by the researcher commenced through pen-and-paper surveys, questionnaires, and focus group discussions with selected students. To ensure the accuracy of data, the researcher conducted checking of the responses to filter out invalid entries. Upon completion, the data remained confidential and anonymous in the conduct of the data analysis, emphasizing the integrity of the process.

Data Analysis Procedure

The study adhered to the test of normality, descriptive statistics, independent sample t-test, nonparametric comparisons tests, Spearman rho correlation, and thematic analysis as the appropriate statistical and qualitative treatments to make meaningful interpretations of the data gathered.

In exploring problems 1, 2, and 3, the researcher employed descriptive statistics measuring the central tendency and variability of the responses. Moreover, problem 4 was tested using the Kruskal-Wallis test and Dunn's Post Hoc comparisons test based on the results of the Levene's test which is the nonparametric counterpart of ANOVA. Afterwards, a Spearman rho correlation analysis was performed to evaluate the significant relationship as stated in problem 5.

Lastly, a thematic analysis was conducted to answer problem 6 in identifying the major themes and codes of the employed coping strategies of resilient students through a focus group discussion.

III. Results

Problem 1. What is the profile of students participating in this study?

1.1 Profile of Students in Terms of Sex

Table 2 below shows the frequency and percentages of the respondents' sex who have participated in this study. The table suggests that the majority of students were female, comprising one hundred four (104) or 67.53% of the participants, while male students were fifty (50) or 32.47% of the total sample.

Table 2: Frequency and Percentages of Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	104	67.53
Male	50	32.47
Total	154	100

The majority of the participants were female because most of the participants during the National Learning Camp of the Department of Education were coming from this group.

Based on the report by the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023), most of the students enrolled in academic strands and arts and designs were generally females, with percentages of 54.3% and 52.1%, respectively. In comparison, males were only 45.7% and 47.9% in the mentioned tracks as recorded in the proportion of senior high school students by track and specialization. It is consistent with the enrollment database of the school wherein the population of female students dominates in all academic strands.

1.2 Profile of Students in Terms of Strands

Table 3 below is about the frequency and percentages of students coming from various academic strands of the public school partnered in this study.

Table 3: Frequency and Percentages in Each Strand

STRANDS	Female	Male	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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STEM	38	13	51	33.12
ABM	34	4	38	24.68
TVL	17	17	34	22.08
HUMSS	15	16	31	20.13
Total	104	50	154	100

It turned out that the majority of participants were coming from the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) strand, which consists of fifty-one (51) students or 33.12%, followed by Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM) with thirty-eight (38) students or 24.68%. Subsequently, Technical, Vocational, and Livelihood (TVL) ranked third with thirty-four (34) students or 22.08%, and lastly, Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) with thirty-one (31) students or 20.13%, to complete the one hundred fifty-four (154) target sample as calculated by the researcher.

1.3 Profile of Students in Terms of Type of Family

As part of the profiling, table 4 below presents the frequency and percentages in each type of family that the students identified in the survey:

Table 4: Frequency and Percentages in Each Type of Family

Type of Family	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Nuclear	100	64.94
Extended	25	16.23
Single-parent	24	15.58
Blended	2	1.30
Adoptive	3	1.95
Total	154	100

It reveals that the majority of them belonged to a 'nuclear family,' consisting of one hundred (100) students, or 64.94%. Secondly, 'Extended family' followed the latter, comprising twenty-five (25) students, or 16.23% of the sample. Moreover, the 'single-parent' family has been observed as the third in the profiling, with twenty-four (24) students, or 15.58%, as provided by the data gathered. Nonetheless, the types of family with minimal samples were 'Blended' and 'Adoptive' families. The researcher gathered two (2) students or 1.30%, in 'blended families,' and three (3) students or 1.95%, belonging in 'adoptive families.'

1.4 Profile of Students in Terms of Family Income

Below is the table representing the percentages and frequency of students in terms of family income:

Table 5: Frequency and Percentages in terms of Family Income

FAMILY INCOME	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Income of Less than ₱10,957 a month	114	74.03
Income Between ₱10,958 and ₱21,194 a month	26	16.88
Income Between ₱21,195 and ₱43,828 a month	4	2.60
Income Between ₱43,329 and ₱76,669 a month	4	2.60
Income Between ₱76,670 and ₱131,484 a month	2	1.30
Income Between ₱131,485 to ₱219,140 a month	1	0.65
Income of at least ₱219,141 and above a month	3	1.95
Total	154	100

As presented in table 5 about the frequency and percentages in each type of family income, the majority of the students were poverty-stricken, categorizing themselves as 'poor' with one hundred fourteen (114), or 74.03%, of the total sample. Furthermore, 'low income but not poor' had twenty-six (26) students, or 16.88%, and 'lower middle class' and 'middle class' tied at third with four (4) students, or 2.60%, apiece. On the other hand, there were three (3) students with 'rich' status, or 1.95%, followed by 'upper middle class' with two (2) students, or 1.30%, and 'high income but not rich' with 0.65%, or one (1) student, as recorded in this study. Nonetheless, most of the student participants belonged to the marginalized sector, with inflation and an educational crisis happening in the country.

Problem 2. Is there a significant difference in students' level of family functioning in terms of profile?

2.1 Test of Significant Difference in Family Functioning When Grouped According to Type of Family

During the data analysis, the Kruskal-Wallis test yielded a p-value of 0.05 with a $df = 4$. This implies that there is a significant difference between the types of family, namely, 'nuclear,' 'extended,' 'single-parent,' 'blended,' and 'adoptive.' In contrast, table 16 above suggests the respective p-value of each type as performed in the comparison test. It turned out that specifically 'nuclear' families ($\bar{x} = 2.11$) have shown a significant difference compared to 'single-parent' families ($\bar{x} = 2.26$) with a p-value of 0.03. In addition, students belonging to 'blended' families ($\bar{x} = 1.89$) appeared to have healthier family functioning compared to 'adoptive' families ($\bar{x} = 2.67$), evident in the p-value of 0.04. Below is the table showing the comparisons made in this study:

Table 6: Significant difference in the Level of Family Functioning of Students when grouped according to Types of Family

Variable	Comparisons	Mean Rank	p-value	Decision	Interpretations
Family Functioning	Nuclear – Extended	2.11	0.97	Failed to reject H_{01}	Not significant
	Nuclear – Single-parent	2.11	0.03*	Reject H_{01}	*Significant
	Nuclear – Blended	2.11	0.24	Failed to reject H_{01}	Not significant
	Nuclear – Adoptive	2.11	0.06	Failed to reject H_{01}	Not significant
	Extended – Single parent	2.16	0.09	Failed to reject H_{01}	Not significant
	Extended – Blended	2.16	0.25	Failed to reject H_{01}	Not significant
	Extended – Adoptive	2.16	0.08	Failed to reject H_{01}	Not significant
	Single-parent – Blended	2.26	0.07	Failed to reject H_{01}	Not significant
	Single-parent – Adoptive	2.26	0.34	Failed to reject H_{01}	Not significant
	Blended - Adoptive	1.89	0.04*	Reject H_{01}	*Significant
	Overall results	9.72	0.05	Reject H_{01}	There is a significant difference.

Decision rule: Reject H_{01} if the p-value is less than or equal to alpha (0.05).

For context, a lower mean value suggests a healthier status, which means that 'nuclear' families are seen to have healthier family functioning compared to 'single-parent' families in this study. According to Mackay (2003), lone parenting has posed issues not only to the parents but also to the children. This study also found that children have increased tendencies to experience psychological distress and difficulty in terms of adjustments consequential to affected parental roles necessary for the child's overall development. Also, in a comparative study conducted by Klaus & Perkins (2008), both families in blended and adoptive types possess configurations vital in creating a conducive and healthy environment at home. However, individuals in blended families may perform higher levels of adaptability and resilience because of their focus on the integration of members' roles and functions. Overall, these findings have led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating a significant difference in family functioning in terms of family types.

2.2 Test of Significant Difference in Family Functioning When Grouped According to Family Income

The data in table 7 implies that there is no significant difference in the level of family functioning of students coming from 'poor,' 'low income but not poor,' 'lower middle class,' 'middle class,' 'upper middle class,' 'high income but not rich,' and 'rich' families based on the Kruskal-Wallis test yielding a p-value of 0.611 with $df = 5$. The results were verified using Dunn's Post Hoc comparison to individually compare the groups to each other. The following table shows the result of the test conducted:

Table 7: Summary of the Significant difference in the Level of Family Functioning of Students when grouped according to Family Income

Variable	Group	p-value	Decision	Interpretations
Family Functioning	Family Income	0.611	Failed to Reject H_{01}	Not significant

Overall p-value 0.611 Failed to Reject H_{01} There is no significant difference.

Decision rule: Reject H_{01} if the p-value is less than or equal to alpha (0.05).

This data supports the notion that financial capacity alone does not fully guarantee healthy or unhealthy family functioning. In the study conducted by Luthar & Eisenberg (2021), though achieving financial stability gives an advantage in the family to secure necessary resources, there was no significant relationship between higher socioeconomic status and healthy parenting.

Certainly, the economic strength of the family alleviates stress but does not solely determine the quality of parenting (Gershoff et al., 2020). Also, Conger et al. (2022) studied the moderating effects of financial stress on social support and resilience. It was found that effective parenting is sustained in the home amidst monetary constraints because of the substantial social support networks and resilience of parents as the very foundation of the family. In general, the findings in Table 13 suggest the failure to reject the null hypothesis, which means that there is no significant difference in family functioning when grouped according to family income.

Problem 3. Is there a significant relationship between students' family functioning and their level of resilience?

Table 8 shows the underlying relationships between the seven (7) dimensions of family functioning and resilience of the students. Based on the results, resilience and family functioning, except 'affective involvement,' have low negative relationships. Below is the table for reference:

Table 8: Significant Relationships between the Seven (7) of Family Functioning and Resilience of Grade 12 Students

Variable	Dimensions of Family Functioning	Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficient	Interpretation	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
RESILIENCE	Problem- solving	-0.294	Weak negative relationship	0.001	Reject H_{02}	Significant relationship
	Roles	-0.212	Weak negative relationship	0.01	Reject H_{02}	Significant relationship
	Communication	-0.239	Weak negative relationship	0.003	Reject H_{02}	Significant relationship
	Affective Responsiveness	-0.198	Very weak negative relationship	0.014	Reject H_{02}	Significant relationship
	Affective Involvement	-0.056	No relationship	0.487	Failed to reject H_{02}	No significant relationship
	Behavior Control	-0.249	Weak negative relationship	0.002	Reject H_{02}	Significant relationship
	General Functioning	-0.207	Weak negative relationship	0.01	Reject H_{02}	Significant relationship
	Overall	-0.207	Weak negative relationship	0.01	Reject H_{02}	There is a significant relationship.

Decision rule: Reject H_{01} if the p-value is less than or equal to alpha (0.05).

The data means that lower levels of family functioning or healthier families are associated with higher levels of resilience. In contrast, resilience is found in families with effective communication networks helping them to develop positive coping mechanisms and adaptability in different situations (Crnic, Arbona, Baker, & Blacher, 2019).

Moreover, roles and affective responsiveness were also positively correlated with one another. It is believed that families who shared encouraging and defined roles were better at regulating emotions, as members had a full understanding of their roles, providing support to one another (Jensen & Shafer, 2019).

On the other hand, Orthner, Jones-Sanpei & Williamson (2020) uncovered the relationship between behavior control and resilience. When faced with difficulties, families with equitable and consistent management of behavior typically show significant levels of resilience. These findings were also comparable to Cleofas & Oducado (2022), revealing the importance of behavior control among members to maintain safety, security, and family cohesiveness during the pandemic. Overall, the data presented in the table suggests the rejection of the null hypothesis, which signifies correlations between family functioning and resilience.

Problem 4. What coping strategies do families of resilient students employ to sustain their education amidst identified crisis events?

Below is table 9, which shows the dominant themes that emerged during the focus group discussion conducted by the researcher. It was found that 'open and healthy communication' and 'optimism and determination' were the effective coping styles that students employed to remain resilient together with their families, followed by 'consistent family support,' and lastly, 'faith.' Following are the respective frequencies, percentages, and statements in each theme identified:

Table 9: Results of the Focus Group Discussion on Helpful Coping Strategies that Students and their Families Employed

Themes	F	%	Exemplar Quotes
Open and Healthy Communication	7	70%	Student 1: ...the real thing is opening up to your family. You should open up to them about your problem and the like. If not to your family, then you can ask your friends or other people closest to you and share your problems with them. Indeed, opening up is the best. There could be other ways that may provide small happiness to help with your problem, but opening up is really the best way.
Optimism and determination	7	70%	Student 2: For me, my coping strategy is like making the most out of it... As I have mentioned earlier, I lost my father at a young age, and the loss of life can't be brought back. And I guess, I made it as a source of motivation, losing my father. Since we can't change the past, it became an avenue to grow both as a family and as an individual. I believe that I have to try my best for my family despite the loss of my father.
Consistent Family Support	3	30%	Student 4: Our mother and father tell us to continue our studies so that we will not be able to experience the same situation (referring to poverty).
Faith	1	10%	Student 10. ... I know that everything happens for a reason, just like what she said (referring to the other student) ... and I know that God has plans for me and for my family. So, I firmly stayed positive in life.

Based on the thematic analysis, there were four (4) major themes that emerged during the discussion about effective coping strategies, reflected in table 19 below. It appeared that seventy percent (70%) of the students considered 'Open and Healthy Communication' as one of the effective ways of overcoming life challenges. According to student 1, "...the real thing is opening up to your family. You should open up to them about your problem and the like. If not to your family, then you can ask your friends or other people closest to you and share your problems with them. Indeed, opening up is the best. There could be other ways that may provide small happiness to help with your problem, but opening up is really the best way." Supported by the statement of student 7, "...at home we open up about our problems for us children to not be bothered about it because they (referring to parents) know that they have a big impact on us, so we really open up and solve things together for our own benefit..." Nevertheless, this data correlates with the findings about the students' healthy responses in the dimensions of 'communication' and 'problem-solving.' In contrast, 'optimism and determination' were frequently expressed by seventy percent (70%) of the students who participated in the group interview. According to Student 2, "For me, my coping strategy is like making the most out of it... As I have mentioned earlier, I lost my father at a young age, and the loss of life can't be brought back. And I guess, I made it as a source of motivation, losing my father. Since we can't change the past, it became an avenue to grow both as a family and as an individual. I believe that I have to try my best for my family despite the loss of my father." Most of the students divert negative events in life as a motivating factor to strive harder, as stated by them that problems do come naturally and moving forward is the only option. Thus, implies healthy coping mechanisms converting negative events to positive outcomes or productivity. Also, following the statements of Student 6, "For us, poverty has been the motivation. We don't really think about not having the money and try to focus more on the things that kept us going."

Thirdly, 'consistent family support' was mentioned by thirty percent (30%) of the participants. According to Student 4, "Our mother and father tell us to continue our studies so that we will not be able to experience the same situation (referring to poverty)." In this way, parents provide support through words of encouragement to withstand the existing challenges hindering their motivation at school. This reflects the idea of family as the support system of struggling students.

Lastly, 'faith' was the least mentioned concept in this particular question. As a country where religion plays a vital role in communities, spirituality is also an important part of coping and building resilience. As stated by Student 10, "...I know that

everything happens for a reason, just like what she said (referring to the other student)...and I know that God has plans for me and for my family. So, I firmly stayed positive in life." Other students have leaned on their religious beliefs, attracting a positive outlook on life.

IV Discussions

Most of the participants were female students, as the majority of the population during the school's National Learning Camp aligned with the programs of the Department of Education belonged to this group. In terms of family types, most of them are from 'nuclear' families living with parents and siblings, which represented sixty-five percent (65%) of the total sample.

Also, the students were assessed in terms of economic status, particularly on the monthly family income of their household. Apparently, most of them indicated 'poor' financial capacity, earning less than 10,957.00 pesos, which might not be enough to sustain the survival and educational needs of the students.

The test for significant difference in students' level of family functioning was tested in two aspects: the type of family and family income. As a result, there is a significant difference in students' level of family functioning when grouped according to family type. This implies that family structure influences the general functioning of a household. Each type of family has different members with a variety of roles and responsibilities shared, forming a unit. The comparisons test suggests that pairings between nuclear and single-parent families have significant differences.

Additionally, many of the previous studies about resilience have mentioned the importance of family in capacitating individuals to develop stable and healthy psychological environments. This study supports the notion indicating a significantly negative relationship with resilience.

Lastly, students with higher levels of resilience have established mediums of communication to share their feelings and emotions, optimism and determination, supportive family members, and strong faith, helping them navigate and resolve problems effectively.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, the dimensions constituting healthy family functioning have a significant relationship in building resilience among students. Family's health has tendencies that can either enhance or ruin the ability of the students to bounce back from adversities and build susceptibility against mental health concerns and issues. On top of that, family structure and orientation have a bearing on the family functioning across the identified types. It was noted in the comparison tests, suggesting significant differences between the pairings of nuclear and single-parent families and blended and adoptive families. Moreover, the researcher has found out the importance of open and healthy communication, optimism and determination, consistent family support, and faith as effective coping mechanisms employed by resilient students in this study. On top of that, they shared that families have an important role in establishing a sense of interconnectedness and their source of motivation. The majority of students possess healthy family functioning in most of the dimensions correlating with their high level of resilience because of these factors, which the school administrators, faculty, and teachers, as well as the parents, could further develop and nurture for their own benefit.

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