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The Development and Validation of the Jonah Complex Inventory: An Action Research on Measuring Fear of Success and Self-Limiting Behavior

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Abstract

This study developed and validated the Jonah Complex Inventory (JCI), a culturally grounded tool designed to measure fear of success and self-limiting behaviors among Filipino youth. Rooted in Maslow's Jonah Complex theory and informed by Philippine collectivist values, the inventory addresses the psychological tension between personal ambition and societal expectations. A total of 450 young adults from Batangas Province participated in this cross-sectional, quantitative study, which employed stratified random sampling. The initial 70-item inventory covered five dimensions: Self-Deprecation, Hesitation and Risk Avoidance, Insignificance, Irrational Views of Past Recollections, and Conformity and Mediocrity. Content validity was established through expert evaluation, and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) examined construct validity, while Cronbach's alpha assessed reliability.

Results identified a three-factor structure—Intrapersonal Constraint, Diminished Self-Worth, and Sensitivity to Judgment and Change—with excellent reliability. The refined 55-item JCI is psychometrically sound, culturally relevant, and applicable in educational, industrial, and clinical settings, providing a practical tool for identifying self-limiting behaviors and guiding interventions.

Keywords: Fear of Success; Filipino Youth; Jonah Complex; Self-Limiting Behavior; Test Development

How to Cite This Article

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Introduction

The self-limiting behaviors among individuals, particularly among youth, have emerged as a significant concern in the field of psychology since then. These behaviors are often rooted in internal psychological barriers that prevent individuals from realizing their full potential. A psychological theory that encapsulates this phenomenon is called the Jonah Complex, which Abraham Maslow coined in 1970. It refers to the fear of success and the avoidance of personal growth despite possessing the capability to achieve it. While this concept has been explored in broader psychological literature, its relevance in the Philippine context takes on a unique dimension due to deeply ingrained cultural values and familial expectations that shape how success is defined and pursued.

The collectivist nature of Filipino society places a high value on social harmony, family loyalty, and community belonging. Central to this lens are deeply embedded values such as hiya (shame), pakikisama (social harmony), and utang na loob (debt of gratitude). However, these values may also generate psychological tension when personal ambition and the pursuit of self-actualization conflict with societal and familial expectations. Alampay (2024) supports this view, noting that Filipino familial values of conformity and strong obligations are positively associated with internalizing behaviors, such as anxiety and self-restraint. These tensions, in turn, often manifest as self-limiting beliefs, including self-depreciation, hesitation and risk avoidance, feelings of insignificance, irrational views of past experiences, and tendencies toward conformity and mediocrity.

Given this, it is imperative to systematically measure self-limiting beliefs as early as youth, especially since this stage represents a sensitive period in which individuals negotiate between personal aspiration and societal expectation, making them particularly vulnerable to the internalization of self-limiting patterns. Early identification of these beliefs is essential for early interventions that can prevent maladaptive thought processes and provide valuable insights into the unique challenges faced by Filipino youth within a collectivist society. Moreover, it aligns with the global advocacy for mental health promotion and early intervention, as highlighted by the World Health Organization (WHO) in its initiatives to strengthen mental health services.

Locally, the Philippines adheres to this advocacy through policies such as the Mental Health Act of 2018, the Republic Act 11036, which emphasizes the importance of accessible, culturally sensitive, and preventive mental health care. It also highlights the need for early intervention and community-based programs to strengthen mental health support, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children and youth. With this, measuring self-limiting beliefs not only addresses individual psychological needs but also contributes to the objectives of RA 11036 by providing evidence-based insights that can guide preventive programs, school-based interventions, and culturally appropriate assessment tools. In doing so, it supports both national and international efforts to promote mental health and well-being among young people, ensuring that policies are grounded in the lived realities of Filipino youth.

Despite these policy efforts, a significant challenge remains in practice. Psychological tools commonly used in the Philippines are largely Western in origin and may not fully align with the cultural realities of Filipino youth. According to Tampus-Sienna et al. (2024), the use of psychological tests and measures is integral to the practice of psychology, and these tools must demonstrate sound psychometric properties to ensure validity, reliability, and appropriate guidance for professional decision-making. However, the reliance on Westernized instruments in the Philippine context often fails to capture the nuances of Filipino culture, thereby limiting the accuracy and cultural sensitivity of assessments. This gap highlights the urgent need for the development and validation of culturally grounded psychological tools that accurately reflect the lived realities of Filipino youth, thereby providing a more authentic basis for understanding their psychological functioning.

In light of these concerns, the present research aims to develop and validate a culturally grounded psychological inventory that meaningfully reflects the unique challenges faced by Filipino youth. Drawing also from the symbolic parallel in the biblical story of Jonah, who resisted his divine mission out of fear and internal conflict, the study captures the struggle of many young individuals who avoid growth due to the psychological burden of success and the fear of being set apart. This inventory aims to capture the complex manifestations of the Jonah Complex in everyday life, particularly concerning internalized cultural norms and self-perceptions. These insights are critical in designing culturally aligned interventions that empower youth to identify and overcome these self-imposed limitations.

In line with these, the primary objective of this study is to develop the Jonah Complex Inventory (JCI) in a manner that reflects the unique cultural values and social realities of Filipino youth. Specifically, the study also seeks to identify the test features and item content that will ensure cultural relevance, clarity, and appropriateness for the target demographic. Furthermore, it aims to design a pen-and-paper format that allows for ease of administration, scoring, and interpretation, as well as to evaluate the level of acceptability and perceived usefulness of the tool among Filipino youth and mental health professionals. While the central focus is the creation of the psychological test, the study also intends to explore the level of Jonah Complex among respondents and examine whether significant differences exist across their demographic profiles.

Beyond its primary purpose as a psychological assessment tool, the Jonah Complex. Inventory (JCI) is specifically designed to be highly practical in real-world settings. It can help identify tendencies and fears among students in the academe, guide the assessment of apprehensions experienced by applicants or employees in the industry, and support the understanding of anxieties faced by counselees and patients in the clinic. By integrating theory, culture, and practice, this study not only enriches the academic understanding of the Jonah Complex but also highlights the direct applicability of the JCI in promoting culturally grounded and effective mental health interventions across educational, occupational, and clinical contexts in the Philippines.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach with a cross-sectional design, aiming to develop and validate the Jonah Complex Inventory (JCI) for young Filipinos. According to Taherdoost (2022), a quantitative framework is particularly suitable for test development, as it allows for the collection and statistical analysis of numerical data to evaluate item reliability, factor structure, and validity. A cross-sectional design was chosen because it permits data collection at a single point in time to examine the prevalence and characteristics of the Jonah Complex in the target population.

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The research design combines exploratory and descriptive elements to guide test development. Exploratory techniques, particularly Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), were used to identify the underlying structure of the inventory, while descriptive statistics supported the profiling of respondents and the summary of their Jonah Complex scores. The integration of cultural constructs with psychometric methods enables the JCI to reflect both theoretical rigor and Filipino sociocultural relevance. According to Gharibi et al. (2024), incorporating exploratory analyses in test validation helps ensure that instruments achieve stable factor structures and accurately capture context-specific psychological constructs.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The study involved 450 young adults from the province of Batangas. The determination of the sample size was guided by recent methodological recommendations for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in test development. According to Gharibi et al. (2024), a sample size of around 300 participants is generally sufficient to produce stable and interpretable factor structures in EFA, while larger samples further enhance reliability and minimize estimation errors. In line with this recommendation, the researchers decided to include 450 participants to strengthen the quality of the analysis and reduce potential errors in the psychometric evaluation of the instrument.

Upon examining the total population of young adults in Batangas Province and considering its four major urban centers, such as Lipa City, Batangas City, Sto. Tomas City, and Tanauan City, the researchers employed stratified random sampling to ensure balanced representation across these areas. According to Almulhim et al. (2024), stratified random sampling enhances representativeness by dividing the population into distinct subgroups, or strata, and selecting participants proportionally from each group to reduce sampling bias. Each city was treated as a stratum because of its varying population size, socio-cultural characteristics, and economic conditions. The number of participants per city was determined through proportional allocation based on the population size of each area, resulting in 149 participants from Lipa City, 142 from Batangas City, and 85 from Sto. Tomas City, and 74 from Tanauan City, for a total of 450 young adults. Within each stratum, participants were randomly selected to ensure that every individual had an equal chance of inclusion.

The researchers also established specific inclusion criteria for the selection of participants. Eligible participants were young adults aged 18 to 25 years old, with 254 aged 18–19, 136 aged 20–21, 44 aged 22–23, and 16 aged 24–25. Regarding sex, 262 participants identified as female and 188 as male. In addition, participants were required to be currently enrolled in a formal educational program or employed in an entry-level position, as these conditions reflect the transitional stage of young adulthood where identity formation, ambition, and self-limiting beliefs are most salient. They were also required to have a functional understanding of the English language to ensure proper comprehension of the inventory items.

Finally, in strict adherence to ethical research standards, only those who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study were included. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their responses.

Research Instrument

The main data collection tool is the Jonah Complex Inventory (JCI), a self-report questionnaire developed by the researchers to assess behavioral tendencies associated with the Jonah Complex. The instrument consisted of 70 items distributed across five dimensions: Self-

Deprecation (18 items), Hesitations and Risk Avoidance (16), Insignificance (17), Irrational Views of Past Recollections (9), and Conformity and Mediocrity (10). The difference in the number of items per dimension resulted from the Item-Content Validity Index (I-CVI) and Scale-Content Validity Index (S-CVI), as only content-valid and theoretically aligned items were preserved for the data gathering of the JCI. Each item was rated using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree), where higher mean scores indicate greater manifestation of self-limiting behavior associated with the Jonah Complex. The mean scores per dimension were interpreted as follows: 1.00–1.49 (Very Low), 1.50–2.49 (Low), 2.50–3.49 (High), and 3.50–4.00 (Very High).

To ensure content validity, three subject matter experts in psychology representing the fields of industrial, academe, and clinical practice evaluated the relevance, clarity, and theoretical consistency of each item. Their evaluations were quantified through the computation of the I-CVI and S-CVI, following current methodological standards for content validation. According to Polit and Beck (2021), these indices provide a systematic approach for quantifying expert agreement and ensuring that the items adequately represent the construct being measured.

The construct validity of the JCI was examined through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to identify its underlying factor structure, while internal consistency reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha (α). The interpretation of Cronbach's α followed the generally accepted reliability guidelines: ≥0.90 (Excellent – highly reliable for research and clinical purposes), 0.80–

0.89 (Good – reliable for research use), 0.70–0.79 (Acceptable – sufficient for exploratory research), 0.60–0.69 (Questionable – may need revision or cautious interpretation), 0.50–0.59 (Poor – low reliability), and <0.50 (Unacceptable – not suitable for research conclusions). According to Robertson and Evans (2020), a Cronbach's α value of 0.70 or higher is generally regarded as acceptable internal consistency for psychometric tools. This approach provides a balanced understanding of both statistical and theoretical soundness in the instrument's reliability evaluation.

The JCI was administered digitally through a secure online platform to ensure standardized administration, efficiency, and data confidentiality.

Instrument Development Process

The JCI has undergone a five-phase development and validation process:

1. Test Conceptualization—Grounded in Maslow's Jonah Complex theory and relevant literature, researchers defined the construct and its dimensions.
2. Test Construction—Items were generated based on the identified facets, with care taken to align language with Filipino sociocultural contexts.
3. Test Try-out—A pilot version was administered to a sample population to assess item performance.
4. Item Analysis – EFA and item-total correlations were used to refine items based on psychometric criteria.
5. Test Revision – Final modifications were made based on statistical results and expert feedback.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, ethical approval was secured from the Institutional Ethics Review Board, which included the screening of the instrument and the review of the informed consent form. Following the approval from the University's Board of Research, formal permission was also sought from the Governor of Batangas and from specific city mayors who required authorization before the conduct of data gathering. Participants were invited through online channels and were provided with an informed consent form that outlined the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, confidentiality measures, and the requirements for participation. The consent form was presented at the beginning of the online platform, and only those who agreed proceeded to the data gathering process. Participants then completed the Jonah Complex Inventory (JCI) and a demographic form in a single session, which took approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Responses were automatically stored in a secure database to minimize data handling errors. Confidentiality and voluntary participation were emphasized, and technical assistance was made available throughout the data collection period.

The data were analyzed by the researchers, who have competent knowledge and skills in handling psychological test data analysis. To ensure accuracy, the results were further reviewed and cross-checked by another psychometrician, thereby strengthening the reliability and the validity of the analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics:

Descriptive Statistics:

- The mean was used to determine the average Jonah Complex score of respondents.

- The percentage & frequency were used to describe demographic characteristics and response patterns.
- Cronbach's alpha was employed to assess the internal consistency reliability of the JCI.

Inferential Statistics:

- The t-test was used to compare the means of two groups in the demographic characteristics.
- An ANOVA was used to compare the means of four groups in the demographic characteristics.
- The exploratory factor analysis (EFA was used to identify the underlying factor structure of the JCI.

Table 1. *The 5-Step Exploratory Factor Analysis Protocols and Statistical Tool/s Used*

Step	**Statistic**
1 — Is the data suitable for factor analysis?	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy
2 — How will the factors be extracted?	Minimum Residuals; Varimax
3 — What criteria will assist in determining factor extraction?	Cumulative Percentage of Variance Eigenvalue > 1 Rule; Screen Test; Researcher Judgment
4 — Selection of Rotation Method	Varimax
5 — Interpretation and Labeling	Researcher Judgment

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical standards in psychological research and complied with the provisions of the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173). Before data collection, approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Review Board to ensure that the procedures met established ethical and legal guidelines. Formal approval was also secured in person from the Governor of Batangas, and a copy of this approval was sent via email to the specific city mayor of the chosen city.

The Jonah Complex Inventory (JCI) used in this study was culturally developed by the researchers to reflect the values, experiences, and social realities of Filipino youth. This cultural adaptation ensured that the items were ethically appropriate, meaningful, and sensitive to the participants' context, minimizing the risk of misunderstanding or bias. Although the instrument was intended for Filipino youth, English was chosen as the medium of instruction because it is the second official language in the Philippines and is widely used in academic and professional settings. Using English ensures that the items are universally understandable across different educational backgrounds, while maintaining consistency with existing psychological instruments and research standards.

Results And Discussion

Table 1. *Frequency Table for the Respondents' Demographic Profile*

n=450

Profile		**Frequency**	**Percentage of Total**
Sex	Male	188	41.8%
	Female	262	58.2%
Age	18-19 years	254	56.4%
	20-21 years	136	30.2%
	22-23 years	44	9.8%
	24-25 years	16	3.6%
City	Lipa	149	33.1%
	Batangas	142	31.6%
	Tanauan	74	16.4%
	Sto.Tomas	85	18.9%

The table indicated that a total of 450 respondents participated in the study, with a greater proportion of females (58.2%) than males (41.8%). The sample was predominantly composed of younger participants, as more than half were 18–19 years old (56.4%), while nearly a third were 20–21 years old (30.2%). Only a small group fell within the 22–25 age range (13.4% in total). In terms of residence, the respondents came from four key cities in Batangas, with the largest groups from Lipa (33.1%) and Batangas City (31.6%), followed by

Sto. Tomas (18.9%) and Tanauan (16.4%).

Table 2. *Mean Scores of the Respondents Across Jonah Complex Inventory (JCI) Sub-Scales*

n=450

Sub-Scale	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Self- Self-Depreciation (A)	2.43	Low in Jonah Complex
Hesitation and Risk Avoidance (B)	2.79	High in Jonah Complex
Insignificance (C)	2.81	High in Jonah Complex
Irrational Views and Past Recollections (D)	2.35	Low in Jonah Complex
Conformity and Mediocrity (E)	2.46	Low in Jonah Complex
Overall Mean	2.56	High in Jonah Complex

Mean ranges: 1.00–1.49 (very low), 1.50–2.49 (low), 2.50–3.49 (high), and 3.50–4.00 (very high).

The results of the sub-scale analysis revealed varying levels of the Jonah Complex across different dimensions. Among the factors, *Hesitation and Risk Avoidance* (M = 2.79) and *Insignificance* (M = 2.81) obtained the highest mean scores, both interpreted as high manifestations of the Jonah Complex. This suggests that respondents tend to exhibit apprehension toward taking risks and frequently perceive themselves as less capable or significant, which may hinder them from pursuing greater achievements or responsibilities. In contrast, *Self-Depreciation* (M = 2.43), *Irrational Views and Past Recollections* (M = 2.35), and *Conformity and Mediocrity* (M = 2.46) were all interpreted as low in the Jonah Complex. These findings indicate that while the respondents may occasionally downplay their abilities or align with mediocrity, such tendencies are not as pronounced compared to their avoidance of risks and feelings of insignificance. Notably, the overall mean of 2.56 falls within the high range, implying that, in general, the respondents demonstrate a significant level of Jonah Complex. This suggests that although they may not consistently exhibit all the dimensions of the phenomenon, their inclination to avoid risks and feelings of inadequacy substantially contribute to their overall high levels of Jonah Complex**.**

Table 3. *Differences in Jonah Complex According to the Respondents' Demographic Profile*

n=450

Sub-Scales	Sex		Age		City	
	t	p-value	f	p-value	f	p-value
Self- Self-Depreciation (A)	-0.687	0.493	1.639	0.190	0.0543	0.983
Hesitation and Risk Avoidance (B)	-4.204	< .001	1.212	0.314	0.3544	0.786
Insignificance (C)	-2.964	0.003	0.905	0.445	0.3496	0.789
Irrational Views and Past Recollections (D)	0.351	0.726	2.009	0.123	0.5804	0.628
Conformity and Mediocrity	-1.181	0.238	3.651	0.018	0.394	0.757

Mean difference is significant at the 0.05 alpha level.

The results showed significant differences in three sub-scales. For sex, males and females differed in *Hesitation and Risk Avoidance* (t = -4.204, p < .001) and *Insignificance* (t = -2.964, p =.003), indicating that gender influences these aspects of the Jonah Complex. In terms of age, a significant difference was found in *Conformity and Mediocrity* (f = 3.651, p = .018), suggesting variation across age groups. No significant differences were observed in the remaining sub-scales across sex, age, or city.

The study's findings are partly consistent with prior research. The significant differences in *Hesitation and Risk Avoidance* and *Insignificance* across sex align with literature showing that women generally report higher risk aversion and lower self-confidence compared to men (Dawson, 2023). Similarly, the age-related differences in *Conformity and Mediocrity* reflect studies indicating that younger adults are more susceptible to conformity pressures than older groups (Wu, 2023).

Table 4. *Reliability Coefficients of Jonah Complex (JCI) Sub-Scales*

n=450

Sub-Scales	Cronbach's α	Interpretation
Self- Self-Depreciation (A)	0.893	Good – reliable for research use
Hesitation and Risk Avoidance (B)	0.853	Good – reliable for research use

Insignificance (C)	0.893	Good – reliable for research use
Irrational Views and Past Recollections (D)	0.834	Good – reliable for research use
Conformity and Mediocrity	0.760	Acceptable – sufficient for exploratory research
OVERALL	0.915	Excellent – highly reliable for research and clinical purposes

Ranges of the Cronbach's α: ≥ 0.90 (Excellent – highly reliable for research and clinical purposes), 0.80 – 0.89 (Good – reliable for research use), 0.70 – 0.79 (Acceptable – sufficient for exploratory research), 0.60 – 0.69 (Questionable – may need revision or careful use), 0.50 – 0.59 (Poor – low reliability, not recommended for research conclusions), < 0.50 (Unacceptable – instrument not reliable)

The reliability analysis of the Jonah Complex Inventory (JCI) demonstrated strong internal consistency across all dimensions, underscoring the instrument's psychometric soundness and potential for broad application. Self-Deprecation (α = .893), Hesitation and Risk Avoidance (α = potential for broad application. Self-Deprecation (α = .893), Hesitation and Risk Avoidance (α = .853), Insignificance (α = .893), and Irrational Views and Past Recollections (α = .834) exhibited high reliability, while Conformity and Mediocrity (α = .760) indicated acceptable consistency for exploratory use. The overall Cronbach's alpha of .915 reflects excellent internal reliability, suggesting that the JCI provides a coherent and stable measurement of the Jonah Complex and its related constructs. According to Frontiers in Psychology (2022), instruments with higher internal consistency (α ≥ .90) are particularly valuable when intended for psychological, educational, or organizational use, as they ensure dependable measurement across diverse populations. Hence, the JCI's strong reliability supports its potential utilization in various contexts, including the academe, industry, and clinical settings, where understanding and addressing self-limiting tendencies can contribute to personal growth, performance enhancement, and mental well-being.

Table 5. *Bartlett's Test of Sphericity for the Jonah Complex Inventory (JCI)*

x 2	df	p
13792	2415	< .001

The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value of .940 indicated excellent sampling adequacy, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (χ^2 [2415] = 13,792, p < .001) confirmed that the correlations among items were sufficient for factor analysis. According to Gharibi et al. (2024), KMO values

above .90 reflect excellent sampling adequacy, suggesting that the intercorrelations among variables are strong enough to produce stable and interpretable factor structures. These results indicate that the sample size and data quality were more than adequate for conducting Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), providing strong empirical support for the methodological soundness of the analysis process.

Table 6. *Exploratory Factor Analysis and Item Retention Decisions for the JCI Self-Depreciation Subscale*

Self-Depreciation	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Decision**
I feel useless at times.	0.572							RETAIN
It's hard for me to have a positive attitude towards myself	0.660							RETAIN
It's hard for me to believe in myself	0.712							RETAIN
I am worried about becoming a better version of myself	0.443							RETAIN
I sometimes see myself not succeeding in life	0.617							RETAIN
I belittle myself	0.644							RETAIN
I don't have anyone whenever I feel discouraged				0.454				REJECT
I know that when things don't happen according to what I have planned, I would end up getting hurt		0.381				0.327		RETAIN
I think I am little to good now at the things that I was good at before	0.476	0.327						RETAIN
I wish I could have more respect with myself						0.383		REJECT
I sometimes don't appreciate the smaller things in life	0.353							RETAIN
I let myself down first before other people do the same thing for me	0.507							RETAIN
Success is far from where I am now	0.462							RETAIN
I got discouraged easily.	0.521							RETAIN

Seeing my friends accomplish more than what I have accomplished makes me sad	0.320		0.347					RETAIN
I have no time relearning the things I have already learned	0.316				0.300			RETAIN
I am driven to prove something to others		0.315				0.447		REJECT
My calling in life is not obvious	0.528				0.366			RETAIN

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of the Self-Depreciation subscale revealed that most items loaded adequately on the first three factors, which were identified as the core dimensions of this construct.

Out of 18 items, 15 achieved the acceptable loading threshold of ≥ .30 and were retained, while three items, such as "I don't have anyone whenever I feel discouraged," "I wish I could have more respect with myself," and "I am driven to prove something to others," did not meet the criterion and were excluded. According to Dabbagh et al. (2023), factor loadings of at least 0.37 are considered practically and statistically salient for determining factors' adequacy. Retaining items with sufficient loadings ensures that each factor is interpretable, theoretically meaningful, and contributes significantly to the construct being measured. This approach improves the clarity and construct validity of the subscale, supporting the development of a concise and coherent instrument that can be applied across academic, industrial, and clinical contexts.

Table 7. *Exploratory Factor Analysis and Item Retention Decisions for the JCI Hesitations and Risk Avoidance Subscale*

Hesitations and Risk Avoidance	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Decision**
At some points in my life, I withdraw from other people		0.317					0.459	REJECT
I don't know what I want in my life	0.388			0.358				RETAIN
I am doing something not because I want to, but because I need to		0.361						RETAIN
I have a lot of insecurities in myself	0.315	0.517						RETAIN
I will never be good enough	0.541							RETAIN
I seldom sense "peak experiences" happening in my life		0.364						RETAIN
I believe we can avoid failing and be a failure						0.382		REJECT
I sometimes let go of the things I truly want		0.487						RETAIN
I doubt my skills and abilities.	0.499	0.390						RETAIN
I have goals in life, and I am hesitant to actualize	0.420	0.389						RETAIN
Sometimes, I have the confidence but not the courage to do such things		0.489						RETAIN
I have a fear of missing out		0.301	0.484					RETAIN
I think people care that much about what I do or say			0.424			0.369		RETAIN
I am defensive with myself			0.376					RETAIN
I criticize myself		0.406				0.358		RETAIN
I am a sensitive person		0.394	0.393					RETAIN

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for the Hesitation and Risk Avoidance subscale revealed that the first three factors best represented the construct. Out of 16 items, 14 met the minimum loading of

.30 and were retained, while two items, such as "At some points in my life, I withdraw from other people" and "I believe we can avoid failing and be a failure," were dropped. According to Dalawi (2025), decisions to remove items during EFA should be guided by both statistical evidence and conceptual considerations. Items with low factor loadings, low communalities, or significant cross-loadings should be considered for removal. In this study, the omitted items exhibited low factor loadings, suggesting that they did not adequately represent the underlying construct and were therefore excluded to enhance the clarity and validity of the subscale.

Table 8. *Exploratory Factor Analysis and Item Retention Decisions for the JCI Insignificance Subscale*

Insignificance	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Decision**
At times, I think I am no good at all	0.473	0.387						RETAIN

I sometimes feel that I am not important	0.364		0.512					RETAIN
Changes in my life make me anxious		0.475	0.367					RETAIN
It's hard to define my life's purpose	0.386	0.338			0.385			RETAIN
There are times when I feel alone	0.517							RETAIN
There comes a point in my life where I feel psychologically stuck	0.632							RETAIN
I have a few achievements that I can be proud of	0.425							RETAIN
I only do the things I feel like doing					0.369			REJECT
I can't cope in this fast-changing world		0.429						RETAIN
I procrastinate a lot	0.369							RETAIN
I can't stop comparing myself to other people	0.389		0.469					RETAIN
I am afraid of change			0.509					RETAIN
Being a young adult strikes me hard	0.620							RETAIN
I am a person of worth, though of less equal worth compared to others	0.386	0.317						RETAIN
I feel like I give more than I receive sometimes	0.657							RETAIN
It's hard for me to express my real thoughts and feelings	0.480							RETAIN
I am highly reactive to criticism	0.385	0.428						RETAIN

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for the Insignificance subscale showed that most items loaded acceptably, supporting their inclusion in the measure. Out of 17 items, 16 reached the minimum loading of .30 and were retained, while one item, such as "I only do the things I feel like doing," was rejected for weak loading. According to Dalawi (2025), items that do not adequately load on any factor or fail to conceptually align with the underlying construct should be removed to improve the interpretability and construct validity of the scale. The exclusion of this item ensures that the remaining 16 items provide a more coherent and reliable measurement of the Insignificance dimension, enhancing the overall quality and theoretical alignment of the subscale for research and applied settings.

Table 9. *Exploratory Factor Analysis and Item Retention Decisions for the JCI Irrational Views of Past Recollections Subscale*

Irrational Views of Past Recollections	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Decision**
I can't accept being judged by others			0.517					RETAIN
It is not an option for me to go out of my comfort zone			0.349					RETAIN
I can't move forward in my life because I keep looking at my past			0.389	0.419				REJECT
I can't accept myself where I am now	0.333				0.545			REJECT
I still think money is an evil thing								REJECT
I limit holding onto the things I am passionate about or the things that I am good at before		0.377			0.419			REJECT
I don't keep track of how far I have gotten					0.402			REJECT
I am afraid to take risks			0.466					RETAIN
I stop doing what I want at times because I was rejected in doing so		0.312						RETAIN

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for the Irrational Views of Past Recollections subscale indicated that only 4 of the 9 items showed acceptable factor loadings and were retained. The remaining 5 items, such as "I can't move forward in my life because I keep looking at my past," "I can't accept myself where I am now," "I still think money is an evil thing," "I limit holding onto the things I am passionate about or the things that I am good at before," and "I don't keep track of how far I have gotten" were rejected due to weak or cross-loadings. According to Dalawi (2025), items that fail to load significantly on any factor or demonstrate cross-loadings should be excluded to ensure the factor structure is interpretable and theoretically coherent. The removal of these items improves the clarity, construct validity, and reliability of the subscale, ensuring that the retained items accurately represent the underlying dimension of Irrational Views of Past Recollections and can be meaningfully applied in research, academic, industrial, and clinical contexts.

Table 10. *Exploratory Factor Analysis and Item Retention Decisions for the JCI Conformity and Mediocrity Subscale*

Conformity and Mediocrity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Decision
My destiny/fate/future is based on my environment			0.332		0.313			RETAIN
I am prone to instant gratification			0.343		0.328			RETAIN
I settle for what is "just right."					0.446			REJECT
Being an average person is enough for me					0.516			REJECT
People around me have "crab mentality."								REJECT
I sometimes feel like I need to adjust to please others		0.463	0.353					RETAIN
I believe what other people told me			0.484					RETAIN
I let other people decide what is good for me			0.443					RETAIN
I belong to the crowd more than being alone								REJECT
I fear judgments and criticisms of others.			0.602					RETAIN

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for the Conformity and Mediocrity subscale showed that 6 of the 10 items had acceptable factor loadings and were retained. The remaining 4 items, such as"I settle for what is 'just right,'" "Being an average person is enough for me," "People around me have 'crab mentality,'" and "I belong to the crowd more than being alone," did not meet the criteria and were excluded. According to Dabbagh et al. (2023), items with low factor loadings or cross-loadings should be removed to improve the interpretability and theoretical coherence of the factor structure. The exclusion of these items ensures that the retained items accurately represent the Conformity and Mediocrity dimension, enhancing the clarity, construct validity, and reliability of the subscale. This approach aligns with the overall aim of developing a concise, theoretically sound, and practically useful instrument applicable across academic, industrial, and clinical contexts.

Table 11. *Reliability of the Revised Jonah Complex Inventory for Emerging Adults*

Factor	Cronbach's α
Factor 1: Intrapersonal Constraint	0.896
Factor 2: Diminish Self-Worth	0.913
Factor 3: Sensitivity to Judgment & Change	0.879
Overall Reliability	0.955

The findings of the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) provided strong evidence that the scale designed to measure the Jonah Complex can be meaningfully explained by three distinct but related dimensions. These dimensions capture different ways in which individuals may unconsciously hold themselves back from reaching their full potential.

The first factor, *Intrapersonal Constraint* (α = 0.896), reflects struggles that emerge from within the individual. These struggles include self-criticism, procrastination, hesitation to pursue meaningful goals, and feelings of being "stuck" in life. Respondents who score high on this factor often report that they want to pursue certain paths but feel limited by inner doubts or conflicting desires. This dimension illustrates how internal barriers can keep individuals from expressing themselves authentically and achieving personal fulfillment.

The second factor, *Diminished Self-Worth* (α = 0.910), highlights negative self-perceptions and a lack of confidence in one's own abilities. This factor is characterized by self-belittling, insecurity, and frequent doubts about whether one can succeed in life. Individuals with high scores on this factor often minimize their achievements and worry about their competence, which, in turn, affects their motivation to pursue goals. This finding reinforces earlier theories that low self-esteem and a weak sense of self-worth are central obstacles to self-actualization.

The third factor, *Sensitivity to Judgment and Change* (α = 0.879), captures a strong preoccupation with how others perceive the individual and with changes in life circumstances. It reflects the fear of being criticized, difficulty adjusting to new situations, and the tendency to compare oneself unfavorably to others. People who score high in this area may avoid risks, resist stepping out of their comfort zone, or rely heavily on external approval when making decisions. This dimension underscores the role of social pressures and change-related anxiety as barriers to personal growth.

When combined, these three factors present a comprehensive picture of the Jonah Complex. The overall reliability of the instrument (α = 0.955) indicates that it consistently measures the construct and that the identified dimensions work well together in explaining the

phenomenon. The results, therefore, suggest that the scale is a valid and reliable tool for assessing the self-limiting beliefs and tendencies that prevent individuals from realizing their potential. This is particularly significant in the context of young adults, who may be at a stage of life where issues of self-identity, purpose, and adaptation to change are especially prominent.

Conclusion

The present study examined the Jonah Complex by investigating demographic characteristics, group differences, and the underlying factor structure.

- Demographic profiling revealed that the majority of participants represented a diverse range of sex, age, and city classifications.
- The analysis of group differences revealed that certain sub-scales varied significantly across demographics. Specifically, males and females differed in *Hesitation and Risk Avoidance* and *Insignificance*, suggesting that gender plays an important role in shaping these aspects of the Jonah Complex. In terms of age, a significant difference was found in *Conformity and Mediocrity*, indicating that age-related factors may influence the tendency to conform or settle for mediocrity. No significant differences were observed across city classification or in the remaining sub-scales, suggesting that while demographic influences shape some elements, the Jonah Complex manifests broadly across groups. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) further identified three core dimensions of the Jonah Complex, derived from the researchers' analysis and judgment, following standard psychometric rules of thumb. The first factor, Intrapersonal Constraint, captures struggles within the self, such as procrastination, hesitation, and self- criticism. The second factor, Diminished Self-Worth, reflects negative self-evaluation, doubts, and insecurities that hinder personal growth. The third factor, Sensitivity to Judgment and Change, represents the influence of external pressures, criticisms, and fear of transitions. Together, these three factors demonstrated excellent overall reliability, establishing the scale as both valid and internally consistent, refining the original 5-factor, 70-item test into a more concise 3-factor, 55-item version.

Overall, the three-factor structure not only underscores the multidimensional nature of the Jonah Complex but also aligns with one of the primary objectives of the researchers to develop a tool that can be meaningfully applied in different settings. The Jonah Complex Inventory (JCI) may thus be utilized in the academe for psychological and behavioral studies, in industrial and organizational settings to identify self-limiting tendencies that affect productivity, and as a screening tool in the clinical context. Importantly, the instrument was developed and validated within the Philippine context, reflecting Eastern cultural values, such as collectivism, sensitivity to social judgment, and relational self-construal, making it culturally relevant and adaptable. These findings affirm that the JCI is a psychometrically sound, culturally attuned, and contextually adaptable measure

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made for both research and practice.

- Confirmatory Studies. While the EFA established a clear three-factor structure, it is recommended that future research conduct a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to verify whether the same structure holds across different groups. Larger and more diverse samples, such as participants from different cultural, academic, or occupational backgrounds, should be considered to test the stability of the model.
- Reliability and Validity Testing. The scale has already shown high internal consistency, but other aspects of reliability and validity should also be examined. For instance, convergent validity could be tested by comparing scores with established measures of self-esteem, resilience, or self-efficacy. Discriminant validity could be examined by ensuring the scale does not overlap too closely with unrelated constructs. Establishing these forms of validity will further strengthen confidence in the tool.
- Application in Counseling and Educational Settings. The instrument can be used as a practical tool by psychologists, counselors, and educators. High scores in one or more of the factors may indicate areas where an individual requires additional support. For example, a student with high scores in *Diminished Self-Worth* may benefit from interventions that focus on building confidence and recognizing achievements, while those with high scores in *Sensitivity to Judgment and Change* may benefit from resilience training and exposure to adaptive coping strategies.
- Development of Intervention Programs. The factors identified can guide program development. Workshops on self-awareness, values clarification, and goal setting may help address *Intrapersonal Constraint*. Programs that emphasize self-compassion, positive affirmation, and skill-building may reduce the effects of *Diminished Self-Worth*. Training sessions on adaptability, constructive feedback, and healthy risk-taking could help participants manage *Sensitivity to Judgment and Change*. Such programs can reduce the negative effects of the Jonah Complex and promote healthier personal growth.
- Longitudinal Research. Future studies may track participants over time to determine whether scores in the Jonah Complex are

predictive of outcomes such as academic performance, career progression, or overall well-being. Doing so would provide evidence on how these psychological barriers affect long-term success and life satisfaction, and whether interventions can change the trajectory of individuals who initially score high in one or more factors.

- Broader Use of the Scale. Although the instrument was developed with young adults in mind, the Jonah Complex is not exclusive to this age group. It may be valuable to adapt and test the tool in different populations, such as professionals, parents, or older adults, to see whether the same factor structure emerges and whether the construct operates differently across the lifespan.

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