



PRACTICAL RESEARCH IN THE MIDST OF ACADEMIC PURSUIT: THE TRAVAIL OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS OF KAPALONG NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra22042>

DOI No: 10.36713/epra22042

ABSTRACT

Through the Enhanced Basic Education curriculum, all senior high school students need to undergo research writing through the core subjects Practical Research 1 and 2. This is to meet the newest trends in education which requires a productive research culture in the different academic institutions. With this premise, the purpose of this undertaking was to explore the experiences, coping mechanisms and insights of the students while taking up Practical Research 1 and 2. Furthermore, the study employed qualitative research using phenomenological approach. The data were gathered from 14 Grade 12 students of Kapalong National High School who were the participants of the study. Through the In-depth Interview (IDI) with seven (7) participants and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with seven (7) participants, the result showed that the latter had experienced apprehension, academic stress and pressure and financial and other resources pressure. In terms of coping mechanism, the emerging themes were grades, diversion of attention and peer-help seeking. Moreover, useless and impractical and fine-tuning of teachers' virtues surfaced as themes for the insights of the participants. Hence, the Department of Education should conduct a periodic evaluation to the implementation of the curriculum. Such evaluation should be a collaborative works of practicing educators, DepEd personnel particularly the focal persons of the research program, school administrators, classroom instructors, students, parents and other stakeholders.

KEYWORDS: *Academic Stress, Academic Pressure, Financial Pressure, Practical Research, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

The increasing global demand for highly skilled individuals has led many educational leaders to push students toward achieving optimal performance, often by aligning school curricula with world-class standards. Countries like the United States, particularly under former President Barack Obama, have emphasized preparing students for a borderless business environment where talent is paramount (Dios, 2015). Academic institutions thus bear the responsibility of equipping students with the necessary knowledge, skills, values, and character traits to meet current and future demands (Fabrice & Roseveare, 2012). In pursuit of global competitiveness, developing countries benchmark their curricula against those of high-performing nations, but often achieve disappointing results, leading to perceptions of failing education systems (Masters, 2014). Harvard scholar Lant Pritchett suggests that overly ambitious curricula contribute to this failure and raises the question: are students failing the curriculum or is the curriculum failing the students? (Pritchett, 2019). In many countries, even before college, students are exposed to research subjects under the notion that such experiences build critical thinking and globally relevant skills (University of Skovde, 2016; Kearney, 2016). However, in an attempt to meet high standards, educators sometimes assign tasks that exceed students' capabilities, causing frustration and disengagement (Catapano, 2009). Research shows that excessive academic workloads negatively impact both physical and mental health, leading to stress, anxiety, and burnout (Stenger, 2018; Sarita, 2015; Hasan & Malik, 2015; Sapru, 2006). This stress can persist into college and affect students' overall academic interest and performance (James, 2015). For instance, students

in Syria, India, and the Philippines report that research writing is a major academic stressor due to a lack of background knowledge and insufficient time (Al-Mukdad, 2019; Sagar & Singh, 2017). In the Philippines, the K to 12 Program, implemented through RA 10533, mandates Practical Research 1 and 2 for all senior high school students, aiming to build globally competitive skills (Orbeta, 2018; Ciocon, 2018; Henard & Roseveare, 2012). Despite its good intentions, many students find research writing difficult and demotivating, leading to poor performance and negative attitudes toward academics (Petrella & Jung, 2008; Paurillo, 2019; Bocar, 2013). Teachers and parents have observed that students struggle to balance research tasks with other academic responsibilities, resulting in emotional and mental distress. This sentiment is echoed in schools like Holy Spirit National High School in Quezon City, Casilayan National High School in Bacolod City, and La Salle University-Ozamiz. In the Division of Davao del Norte, the challenge is so severe that some students consider dropping out, and many express their frustration through social media. While numerous studies have examined students' research capabilities using quantitative methods, few have explored the qualitative experiences, difficulties, and emotional toll of Practical Research. Therefore, this study aims to conduct an in-depth inquiry into the lived experiences of Grade 12 students who have completed Practical Research 1 and 2, focusing on their thoughts and feelings as they navigate this demanding academic requirement.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This phenomenological study focused on the experiences of Senior High students of Kapalong National High School which



is located at Maniki, Kapalong, Davao del Norte. This shed light to the ways and means of the students in dealing with the challenges they encounter while they are taking up Practical Research 1 and 2. Lastly, the study dug up on the insights of the SHS students relevant to Practical Research subject issues and concerns.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the experiences of Senior High School students of Kapalong National High School while taking up Practical Research subject?
2. How do Senior High School students cope with the different struggles they encountered while taking up Practical Research subjects?
3. What are the insights of Senior High students of Kapalong National High School?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The researcher believes that any study contributing new knowledge is significant, as it lays a foundation for future educational initiatives. The findings can aid the Department of Education in evaluating the curriculum, particularly the integration of research writing in Senior High School, and addressing challenges in implementing a research-based culture. School administrators may use the results to provide support for Practical Research teachers through training and to prioritize programs aligned with student needs. Teachers can develop strategies to simplify instruction, reduce student stress, and better understand their learners' situations. Most importantly, the study benefits students, parents, and future researchers by promoting academic success, mental well-being, and further exploration of research-based education.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Generally, the main idea and purpose of the study are ascertained by using the technical words. As a result, the keywords are crucial terms that were established specifically to provide a clear description and visualization of the study. Research study is a careful consideration of study concerning a particular problem. The data or the knowledge that is derived from real time through actual observation. Also, it is an in-depth analysis of all data collected where it creates a path for generating questions (Bhat, 2019). In this study it refers to the output of the students after gathering and analyzing the data about the certain research problem. Practical research is a meticulous, methodical, and impartial study carried out to gather reliable data, make inferences, and establish principles about a recognizable issue in a particular field of expertise. It is a thorough investigation to determine anything, a meticulous analysis to find facts or principles (Zassy, 2015). In this study, it refers to a subject that senior high school students need to be complete as part of the K-12 curriculum. Senior High School. Senior high school refers to the higher secondary education level which is termed as Grade 11 and Grade 12 as part of the Enhanced Basic Education Curriculum (Yagami, 2019). As used in the study, it refers to Grade 12 students who are chosen to be the participants of the study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study utilized qualitative research design using phenomenological approach since it examined the phenomena that was usually concerned with establishing answers to the whys and how's of the phenomenon through in-depth interview and focused group discussion. To shed light, qualitative methods are used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective, usually from the participant's points of view. Small-group discussions to explore beliefs, attitudes, and concepts of normative behavior; semi-structured interviews to gather opinions on a specific topic or with key informants for background information or an institutional perspective; in-depth interviews to gain a personal perspective on a condition, experience, or event; and text and document analysis are some of the methods (Hammerberg, 2016). Moreover, this social science research aimed to collect and work with non-numerical data and that sought to interpret meaning from these data that help understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places (Crossman, 2019). In particular, phenomenological approach is the most appropriate to use in this study since this method looks at a phenomenon from the viewpoint of those who have experienced it in order to capture its essence. Determining the significance of this experience, both in terms of what was experienced and how it was experienced, is the aim of phenomenology. Different approaches to understanding the what and how of human experience are the foundation of various forms of phenomenology (Varpio, 2019). Apparently, it is in this context that the researcher will be conducting an in-depth interview in order to get details on the experiences that the senior high school students of Kapalong National High School encountered specifically in taking up Practical Research subjects. Lastly, this research has its deep interaction to grasp the experiences, feelings and insights of the participants in their travail of completing Practical Research subjects. The information to be gathered collect will be in the context of Kapalong National High School.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The key participants of this study were Grade 12 Senior High School students of Kapalong National High School, with a total of 14 informants—half participating in in-depth interviews and the other half in focus group discussions. This number was based on Latham (2013), who emphasized that at least seven participants are needed for both methods to reach saturation and ensure no new major concepts emerge. The study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability technique where participants are selected based on the researcher's judgment to meet specific criteria relevant to the study's objectives (Crossman, 2019; Foley, 2018). This sampling method was appropriate as it allowed the researcher to focus on individuals who possessed shared characteristics essential for effectively addressing the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participants in both the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions shared similar sentiments during the process of writing their research papers. Their responses revealed a prevailing sense of apprehension throughout this period. In addition to emotional strain, they also experienced significant



academic stress and pressure. Also, out of the 14 participants involved in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, 11 reported that financial constraints and limited access to necessary resources significantly contributed to their struggles in completing the requirements for their Practical Research subjects. This lack of support created a challenging experience that intensified the overall academic pressure they faced.

However, participants shared various personal strategies for coping with the challenges they encountered in their Practical Research subjects. From their responses, three major themes emerged as primary coping mechanisms: Grades, Diversion of Attention, and Peer-Seeking Help.

IMPLICATION

The findings reveal significant issues experienced by Senior High School students, primarily rooted in the Practical Research 1 and 2 subjects, suggesting a need for the Department of Education to revisit and evaluate the curriculum's implementation and feasibility. Participants reported intense academic pressure affecting their mental health, indicating the need for assessments of students' emotional and psychological readiness, as well as targeted interventions. Financial struggles and lack of resources like printers and laptops emerged as major obstacles, underscoring the importance of adequate budget allocation to support the program effectively. Moreover, students viewed the research subject as a mere requirement for passing rather than a meaningful learning experience, highlighting the necessity for teachers to create authentic, engaging, and student-centered learning opportunities. Generally, the study calls for comprehensive restructuring, improved teacher support, and resource provision to ensure a more effective, less stressful, and goal-oriented implementation of the course.

FUTURE DIRECTION

Based on the findings, it is recommended that the Department of Education conduct periodic evaluations of the Practical Research 1 and 2 curriculum, ensuring that the set standards are realistic and achievable within the given time frame through a collaborative effort involving educators, DepEd personnel, school administrators, students, parents, and other stakeholders. A revision of the curriculum is necessary to address the significant issues identified during its implementation and to align it with current educational demands and student experiences. Adequate budget allocation should be provided to support students with the necessary resources for conducting research, easing the financial burden on them. Improving instructional programs and strengthening teacher support systems are also essential, as research courses require educators to take on increasingly demanding leadership roles, which must be backed by consistent professional development and feedback. Lastly, further research should be encouraged to explore the mental health impact of research courses, identify effective teaching strategies, and examine ways to overcome structural and attitudinal barriers in implementing research education.

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