

Coping Mechanisms of a Non-Humms or Gas Senior High Graduate in Education Program: A Case Study



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ABSTRACT: To ascertain the country's delivery of high-quality education and thus ascend the global competitiveness of Filipino professionals worldwide, a new educational system was designed to be responsive to the precedingly specified present-time demands through the Philippine government's implementation of the Republic Act (R.A.) No. 10533, or the "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013". Despite the benefits this law has offered, its legislation has undoubtedly posed diverse challenges to the students, such as the cases of strand-course mismatches among the tertiary students that incredibly induce several academic obstacles in the long run. In this study, the case of a mismatched student was investigated, including the challenges and coping mechanisms. The researchers employed a single case study and conducted an interview with a non-academic strand graduate of senior high school who enrolled in an education program at college. The data gathered were subsequently analyzed through the use of thematic analysis. Consequently, the conclusions were drawn based on the challenges identified by the participant, which included grappling with unfamiliar subject matter and falling behind her peers. The participant employed several coping mechanisms, including dedicating extra effort, creating a study plan, minimizing distractions, seeking support from friends, family, and mentors, and taking frequent breaks.

KEYWORDS: Coping Mechanisms, Mismatch Student, K to12 Program, Senior High School, Tertiary Education

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Prior knowledge is the best indicator of good academic performance and a determinant of college students' behavior in their firstyear (Binder et al., 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2019). Those students who take more complex classes in high school are more likely to have a variety of advanced qualities that contribute to their accomplishments in college and the workplace. A comprehensive academic program in high school may provide a deeper curriculum, exposing students to things they may encounter in college and enhancing their college preparation, as academic preparation in high school is linked to college performance. This shows that students who received more thorough academic preparation in high school are more likely to succeed academically in college (Kurlander & Howell, 2012; Johnston, 2010).

According to Kokemuller (n.d.), college preparation typically occurs throughout a student's high school years. Students often demand a baseline knowledge of academic performance in high school to even get admitted to college. On the other hand, the traditional 10-year basic education system in the Philippines has been identified as a cause for lower efficiency and academic performance among students. Compared to other nations, the Philippine education system requires students to learn the same academic curriculum in a shorter time, which shows the inadequacy of the old system in preparing students for real life and tertiary education (Sarvi et al., 2015, cited in Brillantes et al., 2019). To address this issue and promote global competitiveness, the K to 12 Act was implemented in 2013, also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act.

Comprehensive basic education reform aims to raise the quality of secondary education to meet global standards. This will help students prepare for higher education, including gaining admission to domestic and international higher education institutions. Additionally, this reform will provide more job opportunities for SHS graduates, resulting in a well-rounded and fully developed Filipinos workforce (Okabe, 2013).

The K-12 Program allows adequate time for conceptual and skill acquisition, cultivating lifelong learners, and preparing graduates for university education, middle-level developing skills, employment, and entrepreneurship. The government believes that K-12 is the best approach to addressing a century-old problem in education while also maintaining to be globally competitive (Cabansag, 2014, as cited in Abulencia 2015). Students may select a specialization depending on their abilities, interests, and capacity for education. The subject matter that a student will study in Grades 11 and 12 will depend on their chosen career path. There are three tracks available in Senior High School namely; 1) Academic, 2) Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) and ,3) Sports and Arts.

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The Academic Track is divided into four strands: Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM), Humanities and Social Sciences Strand (HUMSS), Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), and General Academic Strand (GAS). ABM strand is for students exposed to financial management, business management, corporate operations, and accounting principles.

Students who choose this path will be well-prepared for various occupations as managers, accountants, and business owners. The HUMSS strand is designed for students who want to pursue jobs in the social sciences. This strand is an excellent preparation for future careers as journalists, lawyers, teachers, politicians, authors, and psychologists. Students whose interest lies in scientific discoveries and innovation of technologies are most likely fit to pursue the STEM strand. STEM strand students are developing into the country's future scientists, engineers, programmers, and pioneers in their fields. GAS is ideal for individuals who are still determining what strand or track to take in SHS and still need to be more particular about what job direction they want to take in the future (Online Education Senior High School, 2021).

The Technical-Vocational-Livelihood track prepares senior high school students for work following graduation. The program focuses on the ideas and techniques behind information technology analysis, design, implementation, and management, as well as preparedness in health, social, and other community development, commercial, hotel, and restaurant services. Relevant college courses are also available after graduating from this program.

Under Sports Track students are exposed to fundamental methods and ideas of physical education, recreation as well as social, psychological, and cognitive growth in sports leadership and management. The Arts or Design Track covers a number of artistic disciplines. This includes; Theater, Music, Dance, Creative Writing, Visual Arts, and Media Arts. This track is geared at helping students develop the skills needed to deepen their specialty in various artistic fields (Nucum, 2018).

The development of specializations in senior high school, via tracks and strands, helps students achieve a competitive advantage when preparing for college or the workforce after graduating from high school. Encouraging students to select a strand and track allows them to focus on an area they are interested in and have a fulfilling life by teaching them about their chosen career pathways (Online Education Senior High School, 2021).

Subjects introduced in Senior High School are designed to equip the students with crucial fundamental knowledge and skills necessary for Higher Education. This is why students must enroll in a college program consistent with their Senior High School standards to ensure fundamental retention (Duque, 2021).

Introducing new policies always comes with its own challenges and costs, which is no different for the implementation of RA 10533. According to research conducted by Ednave et al. (2018), the introduction of the K to 12 programs faced challenges such as a lack of preparation and professional development, students being burdened with excessive academic work, and difficulties in integrating lessons into real-life situations. Additionally, due to limited resources, students were often forced to choose strands available in their area, even if they were not relevant to their desired college program, leading to strand mismatch. Another issue is the pressure that students face from their families, friends, and peers (Duque, 2021; Quintos, 2020).

In the study conducted by Formaran et al. (2021), participants acknowledged that achieving success in college and future careers would require additional effort. They also realized that having prior knowledge of unfamiliar subjects during high school made studying easier. Moreover, the problems met by students with strand mismatch come in many forms, such as social, emotional, and academic.

With this misalignment issue, this study explored the coping mechanisms employed by the student of a non-HUMMS or GAS graduate who took up an education program.

Statement of the Problem

The study aimed to explore the coping mechanisms of a non-HUMMS or GAS graduate who took up an education program—specifically, a Bachelor in Secondary Education Department major in Social Studies.

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How does the misalignment of the Senior High School strand and College program affect the academic performance of a non-HUMMS or GAS graduate who took up an education program?
2. What coping mechanisms are employed by a non-HUMMS or GAS graduate who took up an education program?
3. What challenging mechanisms are employed by non-HUMMS or GAS graduates who took up an education program?

Theoretical Framework

Problem-focused coping involves actively trying to solve or manage the issue causing stress. Problem-focused coping techniques are similar to ordinary problem-solving strategies. They often entail recognizing the problem, contemplating potential solutions, weighing the costs and advantages of these options, and then choosing an alternative. A problem approach to stress management entails actively attempting to address the problem.

Emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, is attempting to modify or lessen the negative emotions linked with stress. Such tactics include avoiding, minimizing, or separating oneself from the issue; drawing favorable comparisons with others ("I am much better off than the rest"); or looking for a bright side in an awful situation ("Despite all the difficulties in my academic struggle at least it makes me more knowledgeable"). Emotion-focused coping methods may include reappraisal, in which the stressor is

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interpreted differently (and perhaps falsely) without affecting its objective degree of threat. Emotion-focused coping might be viewed as treating symptoms rather than the underlying problem (Lumen, n.d.).

Carver et al. (1989) established that the differentiation between problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies is crucial in managing stress. However, it is essential to note that there is room for improvement in the clarity and implementation of this distinction. Following this, they came to 13 coping dimensions, of which five were considered sub-dimensions of problem-focused coping. These include active coping, planning, suppression of competing activities, restraint coping, and seeking social support for instrumental reasons. The remaining five were seen as sub-dimensions of emotion-focused coping and included seeking social support for emotional reasons, positive reinterpretation and growth, acceptance, denial, and religious adherence. Due to their emphasis on emotional outbursts, behavioral disengagement, and mental disengagement, the latter three techniques were deemed "less useful." The COPE inventory was developed to assess these 13 coping strategies, and it has now been updated to add two more: humor and substance abuse (Stanisławski, 2019).

In this study, a student with strand and course mismatch may cope with the support of problem-focused coping in which she chooses to confront the problem, such as studying hard through advanced reading and self-learning. In contrast, she may manage problems by emotion-focused coping, in which she distracts her attention by doing other things before dealing with the problem, such as talking with friends, hanging out in a mall, watch a movie, etc.

Scope and Delimitation

The study explored the coping mechanisms of a non-HUMMS or GAS graduate who took up an education program under the Bachelor of Secondary Education Department (BSED) major in Social Studies for School Year 2022-2023 at Leyte Normal University.

This study was reduced to a single case due to the unexpected decline of the two identified participants during the last minute of the data collection process.

Lazarus and Folkman's coping theories were used, such as problem-focused and emotion-focused coping, and Carver's 13 dimensions of coping classifications.

Significance of the Study

This study on coping mechanisms of a non-HUMMS or GAS graduate who took up an education program would be beneficial to the following:

Students. This study will give awareness and understanding to upcoming senior high school students that choosing a strand is a defining step for their future tertiary endeavors. Thus, choosing a strand must be well thought of.

Parents. This study will give understanding and awareness to the parents that the K to 12 programs will help their children in their chosen careers and future endeavors. Also, it will help them realize that they should guide and support their students in choosing their strands in Senior High School. Moreover, this study will provide insights to parents the importance of holistic support in case their children are into a mismatch strand.

Teachers. This study will enhance teachers' awareness that strand and course mismatch is an existing phenomenon in some academic settings. And so, the teachers must be keen enough to monitor their learner's dismal performance whether it has got to do with their strand mismatch.

Junior High School Guidance Counselor. This study will help guidance counselors and school administrators understand how important career orientation seminars are in helping Grade 10 completers decide which Senior High School strands to pursue in relation to their selected college courses.

Curriculum Designer. The findings of this study will help the curriculum designer by providing input that will promote curriculum enhancement.

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) Administrators. The study's findings may provide an insight to the HEI Administrators whether the SHS strand and academic performance of the chosen course or program are correlated. And this may serve as bases for policy admission.

Future researchers. The outcomes of this study will be used as a guide or foundation for future similar research.

Definition of Terms

The following terminologies are defined in conceptual and operational manner that will guide the readers:

Coping Mechanisms - These are the ways people often use to handle distressing emotions during stress or trauma. (Good Therapy, 2018). In this study, coping mechanisms refer to how the student handles her feelings of stress and anxiety that are brought on by the demanding academic requirements and made worse by her academic mismatch.

Mismatch student - In this study mismatch student is the one enrolled in a course or program in which their SHS strand is not a preparatory or aligned to their existing course.

HUMSS - Is short for humanities and social sciences. It is an academic strand covering various fields that deal with the exploration

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of the human condition using analytical, critical, and empirical ways – and thereby studying changes in society and human behavior (Global, 2022).

GAS - The fourth strand in the Academic Track, which has subjects selected from the different strands. This strand is ideal for SHS students who have not yet decided on a particular specialization (Llego, n.d.).

Education Program - This means a program mainly designed to enhance the number of students who finish a course of study, leading to licensing as a teacher in a challenging teaching discipline (Law Insider, n.d.).

Tertiary Education - Refers to all post-secondary formal education, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutions, and vocational schools (World Bank, 2021).

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Enhanced Basic Education Challenges

Education is a crucial aspect for the future development of any nation, and the Philippines has recognized this by implementing a 12-year pre-university curriculum. This change is necessary to align with the global market demands, where quality education is a requirement for success. Previously, the Philippine Educational system had a 10-year program, making it one of only three nations in the world with such a curriculum. However, the system has now been modified to be more dynamic and suitable for the current education landscape (Dizon et al., 2019).

The new curriculum was introduced in response to national concerns but it also posed new challenges as it brought about significant changes in the country's educational system. Among the sectors affected are, teacher training institutes seem to be the most impacted because the teachers they produce must be equipped to meet the demands of the K-12 curriculum (Saber, 2015). As such, it is crucial that teachers receive adequate preparation and professional development training to ensure the seamless implementation of the new curriculum (Ednave et al., 2018).

Parents have expressed negative opinions about the addition of two extra years of junior high school. Aside from longer time their children devote in school it is also financially burdensome on their part. The opportunity cost of staying in school is high. This is the main reason Filipino parents hope to see their children start earning a living as soon as possible (Dollaga, 2011).

The annual budgetary allocation for education in the Philippines in proportion to its GDP is minimal (Medenilla, 2019) That is why one of the challenges faced in implementing the program is the persistent shortage of resources in schools and classrooms, especially in senior high schools. This includes a lack of textbooks, learning facilities, and other essential needs for students. To address these issues, there is a need for more learning materials such as books and reader guides, multiple preparations for daily lesson log, and the provision of laboratories and other teaching and learning facilities. (Tibay, 2018; Natividad, 2019).

Scarcity of resources in the education sector negatively affects the K-12 implementation. Foremost of which is the strand mismatch. Students are forced to take up a course in college that is not aligned in the SHS strand (Formaran et al., 2021).

The K-12 implementation is faced with a lot of challenges such as “the curriculum itself location, political situation, economic situation, teacher preparation, facilities and plenty other factors making it more complex to execute (Taveras-Igaravidez, 2015).

Determinants in Choosing a Strand

Teenagers in the Philippines may only sometimes have the freedom to make their own choices, particularly when choosing a career, in contrast to Western society, on which the K-12 education system is based. Students like asking for guidance from their loved ones, including their parents, teachers, friends, and peers. They are unable to make a judgment when they are uncertain. They could also consider other significant elements, such as the parent's financial situation, employment prospects, intellectual aptitude, and many more (Manapsal, 2018).

According to Vallente's (2016) study, the factors influencing a student's decision to choose a strand in Senior High School include academic capability, educational aspiration, guidance from others, friends or peer influence, and parental background.

Brillantes et al. (2019) then emphasized that students also decide on a track and strand based on what is offered at their nearby school. The convenience and low cost of transportation are significant reasons why some prefer a specific strand. Despite the scholarship scheme allowing students to enroll in private schools, students believe that vouchers do not ensure free education. In this regard, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) issued CMO No. 105 s. 2017 emphasizes that all Senior High School graduates are entitled to join college regardless of the tracks or strands taken in Senior High School, assuming they fulfill the entrance standards of the chosen university (as cited in Duque, 2021).

Determinants of Academic Performance

Academic performance is determined by how well students handle their course load as outlined in their curriculum (Alam & Islam, 2022). When considering a student's academic performance, a multitude of factors must be taken into account. These factors encompass a wide range of variables, including but not limited to gender, age, study habits, level of discipline, attendance in class, teacher involvement, time management skills, social tendencies, sleep patterns, partying behavior, socioeconomic status, and parental education level. In recent times, an increasing amount of research has been devoted to identifying the most effective performance indicators. With a deeper understanding of these factors, educators and parents can collaborate to assist students in realizing their full

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academic potential (Arora & Singh, 2017). The study also of Olufemi et al. (2018) has identified several factors that can affect students' academic performance. These factors include their learning skills, parental background, peer influence, teacher quality, and infrastructure.

According to the studies of Agas et al. (2019), various factors influence students' academic performance, including gender, age, socioeconomic position, teacher factors, student factors, family factors, environmental factors, and psychological issues. Several studies on students' performance have been undertaken, and these studies recognize and evaluate a variety of variables that affect a student's academic performance at school, college, and even university levels. Their findings indicate that student effort, primary education, parental educational background, family income, student self-motivation, student age, learning preferences, and admission qualification are significant factors influencing students' academic performance in different settings.

College Academic Challenges

College is an exciting new chapter of a student's life, as it gives a fresh journey and newfound independence. However, this transition can also bring challenges such as homesickness, feelings of despair, difficulty fitting in, and financial instability (Millet, 2015). Furthermore, academic stress has become a part of student's academic lives at the tertiary level due to the different internal and external obligations put on their shoulders. Parents' expectations for their children turned into heavier weights that these children could no longer bear (Reddy et al., 2018).

The academic system can create stress, which can negatively affect students. This stress can come from social factors such as peer pressure, family dynamics, and extracurricular activities. Students often feel pressure to perform well in their studies, which includes completing assignments, studying for exams, participating in labs, reading, and taking quizzes. It can be challenging to balance these tasks and find time for extracurricular activities, which can add to the stress. Academic stress can lead to poor exam performance, school avoidance, anxiety, physical issues, emotional outbursts, and a lack of interest in schoolwork. Researchers have identified several stressors, including having too many tasks, competition with other students, failure, financial struggles, and problems at home or with teachers (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003 as cited in Funmilola & Adesokan, 2021).

For most students, tests and exams are the primary source of stress. However, physical, social, and emotional factors also contribute to stress levels. Family dynamics can also play a significant role. Parenting style, motivation, and monitoring can all impact stress levels. A family's socioeconomic status and educational background can also affect stress levels, as can parental expectations for academic performance. Family structure is another critical factor, as students may feel pressure to excel academically due to their parents' expectations (Deb et al., 2011, as cited in Funmilola & Adesokan, 2021).

Poor academic performance, illness, anxiety, and despair are negative repercussions of academic stress. In the study of Ogbogu (n.d.), the findings demonstrate that every university student experiences various degrees of academic stress, which affects their academic performance.

This study recognizes that implementing the K to 12 curriculum has led to issues with strand and course mismatch, which various factors can cause. This study also acknowledges the academic challenges faced by students in tertiary education. Hence, this study would like to explore the coping mechanisms employed by the non-HUMMS or GAS graduate who took up an education program to deal with academic stress at the same time strand and course mismatch.

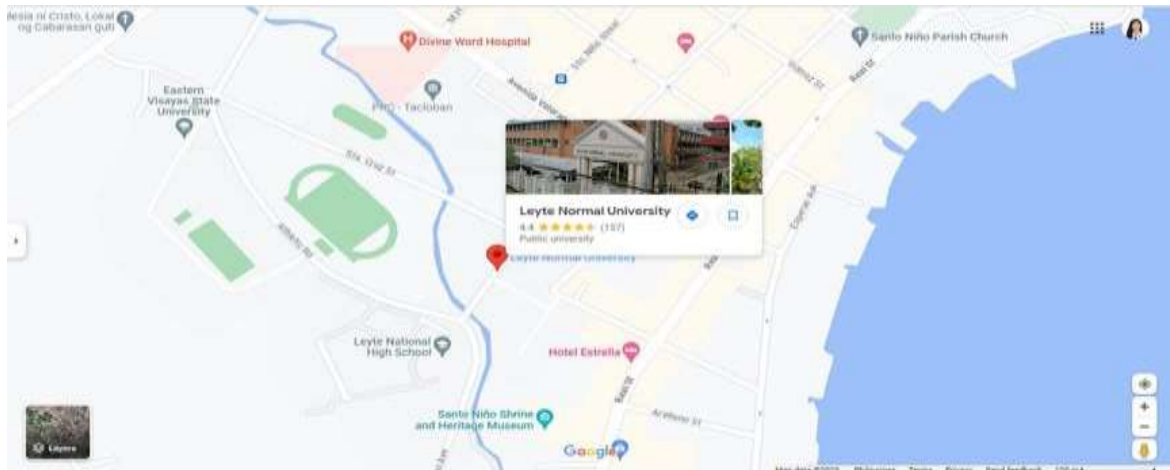
III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A single case study under qualitative research design was utilized in this study. The purpose of a single case study is to understand a case within a specific context by collecting data from different sources, and focus on one group, person, or event (Conde, 2021).

Qualitative research involves collecting non-numerical data to understand the meaning that individuals attach to their behaviors and experiences. It aims to analyze people's perspectives to explain social phenomena, giving researchers a deeper understanding of the subjective factors that influence their views (Crossman, 2020). In this study, the researchers used a qualitative design in exploring the coping mechanisms used by a non-HUMMS or GAS graduate who took an education program major in Social Studies.

Research Locale



The study was held at Leyte Normal University, Tacloban City where the participant is studying.

Participant of the Study

The participant of the study is a TVL strand graduate, a mismatch student, taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) major in Social Studies.

Purposive Sampling was utilized and the criteria used to identify the participant were: 1) A bonafide student of Leyte Normal University taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Social Studies of School Year 2022-2023; 2) A non-HUMMS or GAS Senior High School graduate (means that the participant is a graduate of either STEM strand, ABM strand, TVL track, or Sports Track).

Data Collection Method

The researchers conducted the research proceedings following the standard protocol in the data collection process. First, a permit was secured from the College of Education to conduct this study. Second, a letter of request and consent form was given to the respondent. After the participant gave her consent, a few days later, a scheduled in-depth interview using a semi-structured format commenced. A digital voice recorder was used to record the interview. The responses of the participant were transcribed and underwent analysis and interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers adhered to the following ethical consideration to avoid violations of the rights of the participants during the conduct of the study:

- a) The researchers will request permission from the dean of the College of Education at Leyte Normal University to conduct the study.
- b) Before conducting an interview or collecting data, the researchers will request permission from the respondent. A letter of request detailing the purpose of the study, the mode of interview, and a consent form will be sent to the respondent. With the consent of the respondent, an interview will begin.
- c) The information acquired during the interview will be kept strictly confidential. And rest assured that the identity and privacy of the respondent are protected as provided by RA 10173 of 2012 (Data Privacy Act).
- d) The study will not tolerate any sort of dishonesty or misrepresentation that could skew the results.
- e) The participant will be referred to by a nickname in order to remain anonymous and confidential.
- f) Orientation will also be performed before the interview to give the participant a sense of what to expect. The guide preparatory questions will also be provided prior to the date of the interview.

Research Reflexivity

A mismatched college student is faced with lots of formidable challenges. It is likely that one performs far behind their classmates in academic ability and eventually feels the level of demanding tasks in the classroom becomes overwhelming. It becomes frustrating and stressful when one cannot catch up and fully understand the academic discussions due to a lack of foundations in the senior high school years.

In this study, reflexivity is characterized by the researchers' awareness of their Bachelor of Secondary Education in Social Studies background. The other researcher, a former senior high school student, could relate to the participant's responses. However, the researchers were aware that they only included or contemplated pertinent information and personal circumstances and solely concentrated on listening to and comprehending participants' responses and narratives related to the research topic.

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Data Analysis Method

In this study, the researchers utilized the method of thematic analysis to conduct a thorough examination and interpretation of the qualitative data that was coded. The approach allowed the researchers to uncover and comprehend the prevailing themes and patterns that were present in the data, resulting in valuable insights and conclusions. This method enabled the researchers to better understand the data's inherent meanings, leading to a more comprehensive analysis. Specifically, the researchers used Thematic Analysis using a six-phase process by Braun & Clarke (2006):

Step 1: Familiarization with the data set. It requires actively and repeatedly reading the data.

Step 2: Generating Initial Codes. Coding is the process of arranging the data by enclosing portions of text or images or both and placing a term that denotes a category in the margins.

Step 3: Searching for themes. In various generated codes and developed themes, the researchers identified patterns. The cross-connections between ideas, major themes, and sub-themes were also shown visually by the researchers using a thematic map.

Step 4: Reviewing themes. After developing the themes, the researchers assessed its accuracy and efficiency.

Step 5: Defining and naming themes. The researchers developed and articulated each theme that were essential to the research problem at hand. Through this process, each theme was assigned a name that was both clear and easy-to-understand.

Step 6: Producing the report. The researchers wrote the final analysis and description of the findings.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter contains the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the gathered data in the study. It includes the formulated and drawn themes and sub-themes from the transcribed data of the participant.

Theme 1: Interest, Capability, and Influence

The first theme covered the participant's answer revolving around the course she likes to take in college, her Senior High School strand, her skills, and the reason why she took a program in college that is not aligned with her Senior High School strand.

Sub-theme 1.1: Highly determined to pursue the chosen academic track

The participant was highly interested and determined in pursuing Information and Communications Technology (ICT) as part of the Technical-Vocational Livelihood (TVL) Track in Senior High School in order to pursue a related college degree. Since none of the institutions in their hometown offers ICT strand, she sacrificed to study outside of her town.

Participant:

"Actually, yes, gusto ko talaga mag ano, mag IT" [Actually, yes, I really want to pursue IT].

"Although nag wo-wonder ak hadto kun hain an school na may ada [ICT], kay sugad haamon ha Tolosa National Highschool, waray kasi didto ICT an ira la may ada HUMMS, mayda nira TVL pero an pan luto ngane-cookery. So amo itun bagat nag canvass ak anay kun hain may ada. Tapos ha PNHS (Palo National Highschool) may adaman" [Although I wondered then what school offers ICT as Tolosa National High School, a school in my hometown, does not offer one. They only have HUMMS, and they offer under TVL was exclusively for culinary arts. I tried looking for a school that offers ICT and was able to find one, which is the school where I graduated from].

The participant enrolled in a school that offers ICT under the TVL track, despite its distance from her place. This defies from the top three reasons given by students when selecting a school such as; 1) convenience-specifically, the school's proximity to their location; 2) affordability; and 3) continuation of secondary education at the same institution (Brillantes et al., 2019).

Another thing that encouraged the participant to pursue her chosen strand (ICT under TVL) was the expectation that a graduate of this track will land a work after finishing high school as was told in the career orientation.

Participant: *"Usa gihap ine na reason like gusto ko mag IT kay during an at orientation before kita mag Senior High School, actually gin yaknan kita like if mag TVL kita pwede na kita mag work after nat Senior High, so ako na encourage ak adtokay gusto ko talaga mag work kay gusto ko hin money so amo adto like nasiring ak "aw sige mag T-TVL ako kay para pag graduate ko pwede ako-makakag work ako"* [One reason I also want to pursue ICT was that, during our orientation before Senior High School, they told us that if we took TVL, we could work after graduation. I was encouraged to pursue TVL because I want to work and earn money. I told myself that "Okay, I will pursue TVL because after I graduate, I will be able to work"].

The statement of the participant coincides with one of the advantages of the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, wherein Senior High School graduates open up an opportunity of early employment. Provided that the student possesses the TESDA Certificates of Competency (COCs) and National Certificates (NCs) as an assurance of a competent manpower with such a skill.

However, findings in the study of Orbeta et al. (2019) revealed that most companies that responded to their study were hesitant in hiring Senior High School graduates. While most companies stated they were willing to employ, but subject to preconditions such as necessary competencies and specialized abilities, longer and more in-depth work immersion, and only offering low positions in their organization.

Also expressed by the students was their need for more confidence in their ability to find employment after Senior High School. They were more concerned of long term job security tenure and compensation rate. If high school diploma and National Certificate

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II are their only tickets for employment most likely they will be outclassed by other applicants who are armed with a baccalaureate degrees and professional licenses.

Sub-theme 1.2: Doubtful on one's skills and capability

After graduating high school, the respondent came up with a realization that her skills and capability fall short to pursue college degree related to ICT because she foresees it as complicated and challenging.

Participant:

"An grade 12 graduate naak tapos na ponder ko na kaya ko ba ig recall nak skills na nahibaruan han grade 12 ak? Dire, ansya nasiring ak dire ko kaya [to proceed to pursue a college degree related to ICT]" [When I graduated already, I wondered if "will I be able to recall the skills I learned in Grade 12?" I answered "No," I cannot proceed to pursue a college degree related to ICT].

"Although, nakapasar ak han NC II (National Certificate II) kay siyempre gin prinaktison man nam adto nga- like 3 months – nag practice kami para pag take han NC II, siyempre nakapasar pero yana kun ig re-recall ko adto ngaskills, dire ko talaga kaya adto" [Although I passed the NC II examination, of course, because we practiced for like three months before taking the exam, whenever I think about recalling those skills, I realize that I cannot make it] *"Yun lang kay an pagkadi ko han college bagat nadiscourage man ak kay an ak experience han akon Senior High School dire aligned tak skills ba ngadto han like an CSS (Computer System Servicing) kay syempre it Computer System Servicing kasi bagat more on, more kuan hiya tawag hine- hardware. It usa ka system unit amon igpapanangalon it iya parts tapos ig babalik nam, tapos aaydon nam itun if may ruba tas amo tun didto ako na partnakurian"* [But then, when I proceeded to college, I got discouraged because my experiences in Senior High School did not align with my skills. Computer System Servicing (CSS) is more on hardware wherein we need to dismantle the system unit parts and assemble them back again; we also need to repair it if damaged; that is the part I found challenging].

Sub-theme 1.3: Inspired by her mentor

The participant changed her perspective and chose to pursue an education program in college. Based on the participant's account, along her journey in Senior High School, she was always fascinated by her Understanding Culture, Society, and Politics (UCSP) teacher, as this teacher was very eloquent, and the way the teacher teaches shows so much passion. She thought to herself that she would want to be like her teacher.

Participant: *"Basta makarit talaga hiya [the teacher] ba like gusto ko maging sugad haiya [to become a teacher too] kay very eloquent hiya tapos it iya, the way hiya mag teach ba bagat wow so much conviction tas bagat ma pu-persuade ka gad gihap"* [The teacher was excellent, and I want to be like my teacher too. The way the teacher taught was very eloquent and showed so much conviction that it persuaded me to pursue education as well].

Theme 2: Struggles in College

This theme covered the answer of the participant revolving around her journey and the struggles she met as a college mismatch student.

Sub-theme 2.1: Lack of Prior Knowledge

The participant said that being a misaligned student hindered her academic pursuits. For instance, the track she attended in Senior High School did not benefit her academically because the subjects covered did not form the basis for the course she is currently taking in college. She aptly said that:

Participant: *"Nak gin kuha nga kuan [strand] diba kay ICT man, ha yana nga college bagat dire hiya nakaka bulig gud kaysiyempre dire man kita nag aabre hit system unit nganhe it aton subject [social studies] asya bagat waray [pertaining to how does her strand in Senior High School helped her now in college]"* [The strand I took was ICT, here in our major (social studies), we do not open system units and kinds of stuff like what I did in Senior High School, that is why the strand I took (in Senior High School) did not help me now in college].

This shows that having a good foundation in Senior High School will help students when they proceed to college. In the study of Kurlaender & Howell (2012), attested that a "rigorous course of study in high school might provide richer curricula, exposing students to material they may face in college as well as improving their college readiness".

When the respondent was asked about her insights regarding some academic discourses, she said there were times that she was lagged behind in the discussion. She often encountered unfamiliar words, terms, concepts, and topics that were difficult for her to comprehend. While the majority of her classmates had prior knowledge and understanding of the topics in question.

Participant:

"Kay sometimes may ada mga topic naton na maaram na kamo tas hi ako kay dire pa like ako adi pala ak didi it bagat pinakabawbaw tas kamo aadto na kamo ha deeper-- deeper knowledge" [Because sometimes there was a topic my classmates already knew while I still do not. Like my understanding was still superficial while my classmates were on the more profound knowledge already].

"An natabo na danay dire ak nakaka catch up haiyo kay kamo mayda na kamo prior knowledge tas ako waray" [There was a time when I cannot catch up with my classmates because they already have prior knowledge while I do not].

According to Hailikari et al. (2008), one of the most common problems teachers face in higher education is that students must

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gain significant prior knowledge and abilities required when entering more challenging courses in their program. Based on the above statements of the participant, it shows that lack of significant prior knowledge or learning deficit is very challenging because one has to exert more effort in order to catch up with the rest. Therefore, prior knowledge is necessary to help the student keep up with their classmates and the lessons.

The respondent realized that a firm foundation is necessary for a college student to have an easier path to learning a course.

Additionally, a senior high student must be in alignment with the strand.

Participant: *"Para dire ka na kurian ba masyado mag adjust for example, if mag e-education ka so kailangan mo talaga mag Academic Strand diba kay para pagkadi nim didi [college] dire ka na bagat mawiwindang kun ano it ira gin bibinuhat"* [So that you will not find it hard to adjust, for example, if you're going to pursue an education program in college, then you need to take an academic strand in Senior High School so that if you come to college, you will not be surprised on what your classmates are doing].

Sub-theme 2.2: Regrets

The participant also expressed her regrets in choosing a Senior High School strand that is not aligned with her enrolled college program. She realized that having an appropriate strand aligned with her course is advantageous.

Participant: *"Like if mag e-education naman laak gabay nala't nag HUMMS ak kay bagat adto ka naman, maging training ground ko gihap adto an HUMMS if nag HUMMS ak"* [Had I only known that I will pursue an education program in college, I should have taken the HUMMS strand in Senior High School as this strand could have served as my training ground].

Theme 3: Coping Mechanisms

This theme covers the participant's way of dealing on how to survive the rigors of academic challenges. This theme is divided into two sub-themes to classify the participant's coping theory.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) distinguished two basic coping categories as; 1) Problem-focused and 2) Emotion-focused coping, which are responses meant at "managing or resolving the problem causing the distress" and "regulating emotional responses to the problem. Addressing problems or taking steps to alter the cause of stress are the objectives of Problem-focused coping. In contrast, Emotion-focused coping focuses on minimizing or controlling the emotional distress brought on by the occurrence (Pudrovskaya, 2007). The participant's coping mechanisms fell under these two theories.

Sub-theme 3.1: Problem-focused Coping

Carver et al. (1989) derived a coping dimension wherein they classified active coping, planning, suppression of competing activities, restraint coping, and seeking social support for instrumental reasons as part of Problem-focused coping (as cited in Stanislawski, 2019).

Active coping tries to reduce the stressor's effects by attempting to prevent, eliminate, or both. Step-by-step performance of a coping attempt while taking direct action and increasing efforts are all examples of active coping. This type of problem-focused coping is manifested in the participant's answers. Based on her response, she revealed that one of her ways to catch up with her classmates is to exert double effort.

Participant:

"Dire ak nakaka catch up haiyo kay kamo mayda na kamo prior knowledge tas ako waray so kailangan ko mag double effort" [I cannot able to catch up (with the lessons) with my classmate because they already had prior knowledge while I don't, that is the why I needed to make double effort].

"Kailangan ko talaga like mag double effort in terms ha pag retain han aton mga topics [because] nga hi kamo mayda na kamo prior knowledge tas hi ako waray pa so kailangan ko mag research liwat hit prior knowledge paramaka catch up ak haiyo" [I really need to give double effort in order to remember our topics because my classmates already have prior knowledge while I still do not, that is why I do research so I will also acquire more knowledge and catch up with my classmates].

Planning involves looking at how to cope with a stressor by way of developing action plans, considering most priority to take action, and determining the most effective way to solve the situation. The participant demonstrated such when she said that;

Participant:

"Gin uuna ko... like damo ngane tat trabahuon nga [and] if mayda talaga ak dadamo tak time gin tatapos ko natalaga tun like, like waray uro-stop tapos tapuson kay gusto ko kasi waray na ak gin iisip na iba" [Whenever there are many school-related work and if I have sufficient time, I have to finish those work immediately, by working on it continuously until it is done because I do not want my mind to be preoccupied].

"Usually pag nag re-review kasi ako, like itun na mag s-study ak or nag a-answer ak itun, like kaatubang ko tun kay laptop, tas danay naman kun mayda kita printed ano [materials] gin pri-print ko itun tas nagbibinasa ak hitun tapos tak cellphone adto la itun hit lamesa" [Usually, whenever I review and study or answer our activities, I concentrate on my laptop, or when we have reading materials to be printed, I would print and read it, to avoid distraction I placed my phone away from me, usually on the table].

Suppression of competing activities involves putting off other tasks, avoiding being distracted by other activities, and, if necessary, letting other things or events slip to cope with the stressor. This type of problem-focused coping is evident in the participant's answers. Whenever she encounters problems or events, example family problems, she does not take those seriously so

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as not to affect her studies.

Participant:

"Nag a-ask man ak hit questions haat classmates nga about something na dire ak talaga maaram like bangen maaram hira nabaton hira, for example kan Hannah, urog ak tun haiya mag chat "naano't kuan, ano tun na gin yakan ni sir" so nabaton man hiya" [I asked clarifications from our classmates about something I do not know like maybe they knew already, for example, Hannah, I usually chat with her, and ask from the lesson of our teacher, I am glad that she would reply].

"An naka help ada ak adto na bumalik [to be motivated again] hadto kay nak mga sangkay kay naginistoryahon man kasiak adto haira na sugad gad hine an nahihitabo haak [feeling unmotivated to do her studies] like nagyakan hira na 'uy! Bagat naka relate hira na same kuno same' tas pero nasiring hira na 'pero maaram ka dapat, dapat dire kita magsinugadba kay makakaapekto kuno it at grades' sugad tas narealized ko man nga tama na makakaapekto so kailangan ko mag bag-o." [The ones who helped me to be motivated again that time were my friends. I told them my sentiments and that I felt unmotivated to do my studies, and they were like, "We felt the same," but they would give advice as "You know what? You should not do that because it will affect your grades," like that then I came to realize that they are right and I need to change].

Sub-theme 3.2: Problem-focused Coping

Carver et al. (1989) also derived a coping dimension wherein they classified the type of Emotion-focused coping: Seeking social support for emotional reasons, Positive reinterpretation and growth, Acceptance, Denial, and Turning to religion. They also included Focus on and venting of emotions, Behavioral disengagement, Mental disengagement, as well as humor and substance use (as cited in Stanislawski, 2019).

Seeking social support for emotional reasons is getting moral support, sympathy, or understanding from others. This type of coping is evident in the participant's answers. The participant seeks moral support, sympathy, and understanding from her classmates, friends, and family members by conversing and hanging out with them.

Hanging out with friends

Participant: *"danay nakikigkirita ak tak mga sangkay ha amon la hometown, ha Tolosa, like mag snack kami ha Plaza, tasmag urustorya."* [Sometimes I hang out with my friends in our hometown, in Tolosa, Leyte, like having snacks in the plazawhile engaging in casual conversation].

Benchmarking with classmates

Participant: *"tas danay liwat makig-urusturya ako tak mga classmates [like] "ano nag himo kana? Waray ka pa naghimo? Waray pa gihap ak! Same!"* [Sometimes, I converse with my classmates then inquire and compare whether they have done their assignments].

Moral support from family members

Participant: *"Tapos usa pa gin mo-motivate ak tun ni Mama, like mayakan hi mama na 'kaya mo itun, itun la'"* ["One thing also my mother motivates me in my studies like she will say, "You can do it"].

Another emotion-focused coping consistent with the participant's answer is Mental disengagement, where numerous activities, such as daydreaming, watching TV, or sleeping, can divert attention away from the behavioral aspect or aim that the stressor is interfering with. The participant tends to escape and divert her attention by sleeping and forgets her studies sometimes, but eventually, after that, she will remind herself to get back on track.

Participant: *"Danay nakaturug laak talaga itun. Gusto ko anay kumaturug tas pagmata ko amo na itun bagat gin re-remindko [myself] nasiring ak na 'hoy pagtrabaho na kay harani na it deadline, ma stress ka nanaman'"* [There are times that I just go to sleep. I want to sleep for a while, then when I wake up, I would remind myself that "Hey you have to work because the deadline is fast approaching, and you will get stressed again"]

Based on the data gathered, another Emotion-focused coping visible in the participant's answer is acceptance, where the participant learned to accept the reality of a stressful situation. The participant learned to accept that she is a product of a course mismatch then she needs to accept its consequences.

Participant: *"Pinili ko man ine like kailangan ko panindigan ine nga ak desisyon haak kinabuhi nga nag ICT ak [in Senior High School] tas nag education ak [in college] bagat misaligned talaga nak gin pili"* [I chose this, so I need to be steadfast with my decision in my life where I chose ICT in Senior School, then I pursued an education program in college; my decision was indeed misaligned]

V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the findings, conclusions and recommendations from the study results.

SUMMARY

The study aimed to explore the coping mechanism employed by a mismatch student who took up an education program. The study sought to answer the questions revolving around how the academic performance was affected, what coping mechanisms were employed, and the challenging coping mechanisms. The study used a single case study under qualitative research design and thematic analysis to analyze the results of the findings. The participant was purposely selected after being identified and consistent with the criteria. After having consent from the participant, a semi-structured in-depth interview was conducted.

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Using thematic analysis, three main themes were identified: 1) Interest, Capability, and Influence, 2) Struggles in College, and 3) Coping Mechanisms.

The first theme describes the overwhelming interest of the participant to pursue her chosen strand by attending school that offers such strand despite its distance from her place. After finishing high school, self-realization sink in that her acquired knowledge was far behind the standard needed in college. In the last stint of her high school senior year a sudden twist of fate changes her interest on the kind of course to take in college. A teacher in Social Studies showing sterling qualities influenced her to pursue a teaching career.

The second theme about struggles in college was the main cause of stress that took a toll on her academic performance. It revealed that the participant often encountered unfamiliar words, ideas, and topics as she lacked prior knowledge. To address such gap, she would exert more efforts to catch up in their lessons. She had big regrets that the opportunity cost spent in SHS has no bearing in her education course.

The third theme focused on the coping mechanism that the participant employed as a product of strand and course mismatch. The data gathered illustrated that the participant utilized both problem- and emotion-focused coping. Under the third theme, two sub- themes were identified. The first sub-themed is problem-focused coping, which revealed that the participant was exerting double effort, having a plan whenever she was studying, setting aside her other issues, and seeking advice from friends, family members, and mentors to overcome her struggles as a mismatched student. The second sub-themed is emotion-focused, wherein the participant sought social support from her friends, classmates, and family members. The participant also tends to escape and divert her attention by sleeping and forgets her studies for a while. Lastly, the participant has learned to accept her situation and bravely face the consequences of her decision.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results and findings of the study, the following conclusions have been made:

1. Being a mismatch had a significant negative impact on the participant's college life. She was compelled to grapple with unfamiliar topics and found herself trailing behind her classmates. Furthermore, the Senior High School strand she opted for failed to arm her with the essential foundational knowledge required in college. This predicament affected her academic progress requiring her to put in diligent efforts to meet the demands of her college coursework.
2. Despite the mounting challenges brought by the demanding tasks in college the participant managed to thrive academically by using coping mechanism techniques. To overcome her challenges as a mismatch student, the participant put in extra effort, created a study plan, and set aside other distractions. She also sought support from friends, family, and mentors. Sometimes, she would take breaks by sleeping or temporarily forgetting about her studies. Despite the difficulties, the participant has learned to accept her situation and face the consequences of her decisions with courage.
3. The most challenging coping mechanisms of the respondent were understanding the lessons, discussions, and assignments. And the absence of a reliable peers or family members to turn to whenever there are academic related matters to clarify.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. The students entering Senior High School should be firm and straightforward in choosing a strand to avoid any potential misalignments in their college career.
2. The college instructors, mentors, or professors encountering student mismatch should be patient and extend remedial sessions or classes to complement their learning deficit.
3. The Higher Education Institution (HEIs) should come up with a policy of strand alignment in the course or program offerings so as not to have a mismatch.
4. Future researchers, who intend to conduct a similar study, may include more respondents and use other methodologies.

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