

Struggles and Strategies of Senior High School in Research Subjects

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research examines the facilitators and impediments encountered by senior high school students enrolled in research subjects at Sugod Integrated School, Valencia City, Bukidnon, Philippines during the school year 2024 to 2025. This study considers multiple barriers to student performance in research studies, including anxiety, resource access, language, and time management. The data were analyzed thematically using an open-ended questionnaire and document analysis to extract themes relating to the students' lived experiences. The results suggest that although students wanted to embrace the value of research to enhance their learning and future careers in developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills, they still experienced challenges in topics, data management, and the research process. The participants utilized strategies to cope with the aforementioned challenges by breaking research tasks into manageable parts, seeking feedback, and using the Internet as a resource. This study emphasizes future educators' responsibility to support students in developing their research capabilities and positive learning environments. Recommendations included starting research projects early in the academic year, teaching effective time management, and increasing student growth mindset to prepare them for overcoming difficulties in achieving academic success.

Keywords: Senior high school students, Research Challenges, Coping Strategies, Qualitative Study, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Senior high school students in the Philippines face a variety of challenges during their academic learning process, especially in the areas of researching topics. In addition to some limitations to students, the adoption of an evidenced-based curriculum has the objective of promoting the development of a research culture among learners. The present qualitative study aims to explore the issues and strategies encountered by senior high school students in their research subjects at Sugod Integrated School, Sugod Valencia City, Bukidnon, Philippines during the School Year 2024–2025.

One of the most significant challenges facing secondary school students in the Philippines is the high level of pressure that they are under to attain high academic performance. This high pressure is exacerbated by their need to meet their need for resources and language barriers (Dofeliz, 2021). At the same time, research anxiety can negatively impact student's overall academic performance, making it that much harder to succeed (Roxas, 2018). Although these issues exist in a general sense, localized studies must focus on the specific challenges students face and how these issues impact their practice when writing a research paper within a particular field of study in the Philippines. By doing this, we can better understand their specialized experiences and provide tailored support to help students succeed academically.

This study examines students' performance in their research subjects and to what degree it could be affected by what their parents and teachers think about their performance. It looks at factors such as anxiety levels, the resources and skills available to them, and how well they understand the language they are studying. Looking at how all these factors interact with each other can have a profound impact on a student's experience. The purpose

of this study is to develop insights into methods by which teachers and schools can improve their support of students in their research projects. Therefore, they are given a better opportunity to succeed in learning.

Qualitative research has also been done all over the world to discuss the experiences of students in higher education, which they feel that help them reach their goals in their area, and their emotional stages outside the classroom (Evans et al. 2020). According to a local study in the Philippines, high school students are met with a number of difficulties. These include the pressure to do well, limited resources and language barriers (Versoza, 2023) well. Another study found that students generally inform about research well, but there is a high level of concern when they do (Roxas, 2018). According to another research on the elderly in the Philippines, you worry about the opportunities to get a job in the future, and college entrances are two things that can affect their academic achievement (Dofeliz, 2021).

The idea behind the study is to analyze difficulties and opportunities in meeting high school students while doing research projects at Sugod Integrated School. By studying what the seniors are experiencing, this study hopes to gather useful information that can help these seniors overcome their difficulties and improve their performances in researching courses. It is important to know what challenges they are facing and how they try to approach the problem. As a whole, the aim is to find ways to make the research process easier and more enjoyable for these seniors, who can succeed, and who are more confident in their academic work.

METHODOLOGY

Using a qualitative research approach, this study examines the problems encountered by public senior high school students in a particular research project. The study is distinctive in focusing on participant's experiences to explain their practices and offer meaningful explanations about their research processes (Evans et al., 2020).

This qualitative study consisted of 9 high school students at Sugod Integrated School, representing the academic strand: Humanities and Social Sciences track. Participants were admitted through determined tests based on registration for research subjects during the school year 2024-2025. The data collection used an online open questionnaire organized on Google Forms, including 4 (four) questions, designed to counter strategies related to students' experiences, challenges and research projects. To enrich the data, the study will review the relevant documents including research documents, tasks and comments to gain an understanding of the reference (Bowen, 2009; Lofland et al., 2006). An important reflection on this approach accepts that although surveys can get honest and diverse reactions, they can face a face-to-face interview or depth of focus groups. Future research may benefit from incorporating these extra qualitative methods for capturing rich emotional and relevant data, as well as the approach to teachers and administrators, who were not involved in this study.

Thematic analysis was conducted followed Braun and Clarke (2006) six-step process: familiar with data, generated initial codes, discovered subjects, review subjects, define subjects and names and build reports. The moral protocols were strictly. All participants were obtained consent, and all data was secured by identifying the information and removing information from only the total conclusions (American Psychological Association, 2020; National Research Council, 2003). The study also recognized the ability of power dynamic between students and teachers, and took steps to minimize coercion by making participation entirely voluntary and confidential.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part of the study elaborates its findings based on the themes pertinent to the responses and relevant literature provided by participants. The principal themes are (1) The Importance of Research in Senior High School and (2) Struggles and Strategies in Research.

Research subjects are important in senior high school education because they provide students with critical skills needed for future success, both academically and professionally. Participants consistently noted how research promotes the formation of critical thinking, problem-solving, analytical skills, creativity, and communication

skills. This skill will not only help students in furthering their education but also assist them in addressing problems in the real world. One individual responded, "Research teaches students critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills. It teaches them how to collect, analyze, and interpret information." Creswell, 2018, agrees, stating that research enhances a student's ability to critique and evaluate information and then make decisions based on that information which is critical to students in academic and real-world situations.

The worth of research subjects is recognized, but various things can prohibit students from progressing through those subjects. Some of the issues include finding a good topic, developing a research question, the ability to obtain credible data, data analysis, the ability to utilize time effectively, and writing simply. One student said, "Some of the struggles I have faced include, you know, finding a good research topic, and, like, understanding how properly to cite sources, and managing time." Even though they encounter difficulty, students utilize various strategies to reduce those struggles to be successful, such as starting the research early, breaking down the task into smaller steps, asking for help from peers or teachers, and using online tools. Kothari, 2004 noted the importance of proper time management as well; in fact, he stated that "breaking an assignment into small, manageable steps, reduces the pressure of getting things done, thus reducing stress and increasing productivity." Additionally, seeking guidance from mentors or peers enhances learning outcomes by providing new perspectives on complex problems, as noted by Zimmerman & Schunk (2011).

To help students overcome their struggles in research subjects, several recommendations are proposed based on the findings. It is important to start early and not procrastinate in addition to breaking down tasks into smaller, more manageable steps. Students should also not hesitate to request assistance if they are feeling stuck, look for available resources such as online tools and databases, and stay positive to help navigate obstacles. One student recommended, "Stay positive; struggling is part of learning." By utilizing these techniques, students can develop their research skills and experience academic success. Educators should assist students through the research process to support their learning and development.

The results from this study highlight the dual role of research at the senior high school level, elevating the significance of research in the cultivation of competencies while carefully noting the challenges for students. The primary themes relating to the importance of research and the challenges and strategies made clear by students as they engaged with the research process overlap with established perspectives regarding students' experiences in research engagement. Student comments highlight the various roles research can play in senior high school. For example, one student stated "The reason why research is important in senior high school is that it gives students critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills," which fits with the theme indicating research is important for developing skills (Response 2, Problem 1). This reflects that research activities develop students' abilities to critically assess and evaluate information and exercise their decision making which applies to academic and professional situations.

The difficulties highlighted by the students, such as not having a clear research topic, managing their time, and engaging with research methodologies, are reflected in their responses. For example, one stated, "Some of the struggles I've faced are, are finding a good research topic; understanding how properly cite sources; and managing time between researching, writing, and summarizing" (Response 8, Problem 2). This feedback is congruent with the challenges students faced at the beginning of an inquiry project. Still, the strategies that students developed in response to research issues, such as breaking the task into smaller pieces, gaining support, and using online tools to facilitate the process (for example, "To address these problems, I've started breaking down assignments into smaller pieces, and building in deadlines for each part. I've also started using online tools, like citation generators and research databases." (Response 8, Problem 3), represents best practice for addressing research projects.

According to the findings, senior high school students view research as an important mechanism for developing essential skills for higher education and the workplace. As one participant commented, "Research helps you learn to think carefully, to solve problems, and to find good information. It helps you to study things that you

enjoy, learn how to share to explain your ideas, and to get practical skills for college and jobs" (Response 6, Problem 1). This provides evidence that students appreciate research as a valuable asset for their learning and professional development. Nonetheless, several obstacles in the research process might necessitate the application of strategic management approaches. They faced several challenges, including choosing broadly relevant research topics, arranging and assessing data, and efficiently allocating their time given their busy schedules and other academic commitments. For example, "It can be difficult to find the right, good, quality information, to plan your time well, to write in written text, to understand what your information means, and not to plagiarize" (Response 6, Problem 2).

The main themes and subtopics of Table 1, which originated from the thematic analysis of secondary school students as research subjects, are completely summarized. These subjects promote a double focus on the study: the accepted value of research to encourage important educational and professional abilities, as well as different obstacles during the research process. Representative quotes from participants are used to highlight each sub-theme, which provides deep, relevant insight into their real experiences. This table highlights regions where teachers can improve the help and guidance by organizing and clarifying the complex relationships between the ideas of research as a useful teaching tool and real challenges.

Table 1: Summary of Themes, Sub-themes, and Illustrative Quotes

Theme	Sub-theme	Illustrative Student Quote
1. Importance of Research in Senior High School	Skill Development	"Research teaches students critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills."
	Preparation for Future	"It helps you get practical skills for college and jobs."
	Independent Learning	"Research helps you learn to think carefully and study things you enjoy."
2. Struggles and Strategies in Research	Topic Selection	"Finding a good research topic is difficult."
	Time Management	"Managing time between research and other subjects is hard."
	Data Collection & Analysis	"It can be difficult to find quality information and analyze data."
	Citation/Plagiarism	"I find it confusing to cite sources correctly."
	Task Breakdown	"I break the project into smaller parts with deadlines."
	Seeking Support	"I ask teachers and classmates when I'm stuck."
	Use of Online Tools	"Citation generators help me avoid plagiarism."
	Positive Mindset	"Stay positive; struggling is part of learning."

Table 2 presents selected student responses alongside the key skills they highlight as outcomes or challenges of engaging in research subjects.

Table 2: Student Responses and Skills Highlighted

Student Response	Skill Highlighted
“Research teaches students critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills. It teaches them how to collect, analyze, and interpret information.”	Critical thinking, problem-solving, analytical skills
“Research helps you learn to think carefully, to solve problems, and to find good information. It helps you to study things that you enjoy, learn how to share and explain your ideas, and to get practical skills for college and jobs.”	Critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, practical skills
“Some of the struggles I have faced include finding a good research topic, understanding how to properly cite sources, and managing time.”	Topic selection, citation skills, time management
“I break the project into smaller parts and build deadlines for each. I also use citation generators and research databases.”	Task management, use of technology, research skills
“Stay positive; struggling is part of learning.”	Growth mindset, resilience
“It can be difficult to find the right, good, quality information, to plan your time well, to write in clearly written text, to understand what your information means, and to not plagiarize.”	Information literacy, time management, academic writing, ethical research practices

When students understand the useful strategy for work separation and help, implementation errors show a link between knowledge and practice. Teachers should provide systematic supervision and direction to support self-regulated learning (Zimmerman and Schunk, 2011). In addition, increasing dependence on technology and its function in dealing with research questions, indicate that the future study should be knowledgeable when integrating technology-based platforms. Students can benefit greatly from this integration, of their educational experiences and help stop the difference between theory and behavior. To support the student's success, teachers must: Encourage the initial initiation of research projects; provide clear instructions on time management and research skills; development promotes mentality as a struggle is part of learning; give access to resources, including technology-based equipment such as quotation software and online collaboration platforms; and include mental welfare and stress management strategies to reduce research anxiety.

This study is limited by its single school focus and sample size. Future research must be included: Interview or focus group to capture rich emotional and relevant data; Views from teachers and administrators to understand support systems; Search for mental welfare and stress management intervention; and examine technology integration in research training.

Research subjects are considered important for the development of important educational and professional abilities of secondary school students at Sugod Integrated School. However, challenges remain such as subject alternatives, citation, time management and data processing. Students use strategies as a labor department, want help and use resources online. Teachers should promote a supportive environment to start an initial project, promote research and time management skills, promote a positive mentality and address mental welfare. This effort can increase students' participation and success, and can better prepare them for higher education and careers.

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