

SLONGAN



Volume 3 • September 2017

Official Research Journal of **COR JESU COLLEGE**

EXCEEDING THE USUAL: STRUGGLES AND COPING MECHANISMS OF PARENTS WITH DIFFERENTLY-ABLED CHILDREN

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*Excellence
Community
Apostleship*

EDITORIAL POLICY

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Exceeding the Usual: Struggles and Coping Mechanisms of Parents with Differently-abled Children

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TO CITE THIS ARTICLE :

Tudy, I, Jumawan, J.A., Banuelos, R.J., Ebar, M.V., Dida-agun, N., and Villaflo, J.A. (2017). Exceeding the usual: Struggles and coping mechanisms of parents with differently-abled children, *Slongan*, 3(1), 4–29.

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Exceeding the Usual: Struggles and Coping Mechanisms of Parents with Differently-abled Children

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Social Science, struggles of parents, coping mechanisms, differently-abled children, qualitative study, phenomenology, Philippines

It is unplanned for parents to have children with disabilities and this certain phenomenon has been studied across the globe for years. Studies reported that parents with differently-abled children went through bigger challenges, and they experienced rough terrains in their situation. The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to discover the struggles and coping mechanisms of parents having differently-abled children. The study employed a qualitative design using phenomenological approach. Through purposive sampling, fifteen (15) participants willingly responded to questions regarding the struggles they encountered as parents of differently-abled children and their coping mechanisms through key informant interview technique. Results revealed six themes as regards their struggles. Participants were challenged communicating with the child, stressed of child's frequent sickness, troubled about child's misdemeanor, wounded by the slur of bullying and rejection, burdened financially, and strained emotionally. Furthermore, eight themes emerged as their coping mechanisms. A range of struggles experienced by the parents impacted them and their family. Furthermore, coping mechanisms applied by parents were geared towards children's well-being. And, they served as their weapons in overcoming their day-to-day struggles.

Introduction

"Appreciate your parents. You never know what sacrifices they went through for you."
—Anonymous

Parents have always been there to support, strengthen, and guide their children. It is by nature that parents want only what is good, if not best, for them. They would not like their child to be ill, disabled, or harmed in anyway. However, it is not under anyone's control to decide whether or not a person will have a child with disability; it is always unplanned (Brown, Goodman, Küpper, 2003; Venkatesh Kumar, 2008). Studies revealed that parents who were gifted with differently-abled children had bigger challenges to overcome (Di Giulio, Philipoy, & Jaschinski, 2014; Guttierrez, 2009; Parish, Rose, Grinstein-Weiss, Richman & Andrews, 2008; Sivberg, 2002; S'lungile, Ntinda, & Hlanze, 2015; Venkatesh Kumar, 2008) and the journey of going through rough terrains had never been easy (Brown, et al., 2003; S'lungile, et al., 2015). Hence, struggles for parents of children with special needs were unavoidable.

Unfortunately, a huge number of individuals suffered from disabilities. In fact, the report of the 2005 United Nations Children's Fund estimated about 150 million children with disabilities under the age of 18 (World Health Organization 2011). Moreover, in the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) context, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the World Report on Disability 2011 conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that there were at least 15,691,031 million persons with disabilities (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2014). In the Philippines, according to the 2010 Census Population and Housing, there were 935,551 recorded persons with disability; around 71,000 were from Region XI (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2013). And, parents of these children had to attend to their needs.

Many of the struggles in parenting a differently-abled child were universal (Williams, 2001). A few of the common struggles would include difficulty in accepting their child's condition (Nahial, Molina, Natividad, Nicdao, & O'Brien, 2011; Siklos & Kerns, 2007) and emotional impact on the family (Di Giulio, et al., 2014; Goudie, Havercamp, Ranbom, & Jamieson, 2011; S'lungile, et al., 2015; Smith, 2003; Stein, 2005). In addition, these parents also had financial problems (Boyd, 2015; DeRigne, 2012; Di Giulio, et al., 2014; Goudie, et al., 2011; S'lungile, et al., 2015), parental struggles (Boyd, 2015; Ong, Chandran, & Peng, 2000; Williams, 2001) and physical exhaustion (Heller, 2016; Stein, 2005; Williams, 2001). Moreover, other problems they experienced were finding right information and services for their child (Sivberg, 2002; Smith, 2003; Stein, 2005; Williams, 2001), and worrying about their child's future (Björquist, Nordmark, & Hallström, 2016; Sivberg, 2002; William, 2001). Based on these findings, to be a parent of a child with special needs took a lot of sacrifices not only for the parents, but for the entire family as well.

Considering the challenges these parents faced, they normally followed a path that was often filled with strong emotions (Smith, 2003). And, the emotional strains they felt were denial, fear, guilt, anger, confusion, powerlessness, and disappointment (Smith, 2003). Furthermore, they had feelings of emptiness, loneliness and rejection (Di Giulio, et al., 2014). Likewise, Ergün and Ertem (2012) affirmed that parents also experienced sadness, anger, and loneliness. For Brown et al. (2003) several reactions by parents could vary to some extents. Some might experience higher levels than others, but it was considered completely normal and valid. Hence, parents experienced different emotions in varying extents.

Despite the challenges they experienced, parents had their own various ways in addressing their problems (Di Giulio, et al., 2014). Specifically, their coping mechanisms would include getting all the possible information about their child's disability (Brown, et al., 2003; Resurreccion, 2013; Smith, 2003; Wright & Taylor, 2014), accepting the fact that God has reasons for everything, even the condition of their child (Nahial, et al. 2011), giving unconditional love and support to their child (Resurreccion, 2013), getting support from support groups or other families that could help them in their situation (Brown, et al., 2003; Nahial, et al., 2011; Sivberg, 2002; Smith, 2003;), and admitting their child to health care homes and service providers (Drummond, Looman, & Phillips, 2012; King, Baxter, Rosenbaum, Zwaigenbaum, & Bates, 2009). Others, having loved ones with special needs, could also learn from the aforementioned strategies.

Studies, records and data globally, regionally, and locally showed that differently-abled children were affecting parents and families. However, in our locality, this phenomenon is poorly explored by researchers. With this, there was a need to investigate on the struggles that Filipino parents experienced through this qualitative study. Moreover, this study took on a different angle of parents with differently-abled children, as it discovered not only their struggles, but also their coping mechanisms. The findings of this study contribute to the body of literature on the experiences of Filipinos with differently-abled children. In addition, other parents who had same experience could also gain knowledge from the coping mechanisms they shared.

Theoretical Lens

This study could be viewed best through the lens of the Family Stress Model developed by Conger and Elder (1994). According to Scaramella, Sohr-Preston, Callahan, and Mirabile (2008), the model pointed out that most parents who have differently-abled children encountered severe economic pressures because of the demands of their situation. Such pressure might weaken parents' mental health and their adjustment towards their child's condition. This model could explain why participants of the study were stressed because they had various struggles as parents of children with special needs. Their children experienced frequent sickness and hospitalization. As a result, they were burdened financially.

Struggles were inevitable to every family but most, if not all, could handle those. According to the Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) Model developed by McCubbin and Patterson (1983), parents have a "pre-crisis adjustment and post-crisis adaptation". The model identified variables in the aspects of an individual's psychology, intrafamilial orientation, and society. It stated that families went through cycles of adjustment, crisis, and adaptation. Likewise, parents could experience various struggles, but eventually, they developed coping mechanisms to conquer them and adapted to the crises they encountered.

In terms of strategic actions in dealing with struggles, training or counseling would not be enough to cater to the needs of parents with differently-abled children according to Simultaneous Counseling and Training Model developed by Gupta, Sood, and Kukreja (2014). To have operative intervention, enhanced counseling and training must be given in order to have the results respectively: balance their emotions so as to motivate them and help them recognize that their children are unique, hence, they should take care and raise them well. This model presented concrete ways on how parents should deal with their struggles. It could be a foundation of the implementation of programs which were rooted on intervening operatively to the needs of parents with differently-abled children.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to discover the struggles and coping mechanisms of parents having differently-abled children in Davao del Sur.

Research Questions

1. What are the struggles of parents who have differently-abled children?
2. What are the coping mechanisms of parents in dealing with their struggles?

Review of Related Literature

In this section, different literatures and studies associated to the study were reviewed, particularly struggles of parents having differently-abled children and their coping mechanisms.

Struggles of Parents having Differently-Abled Children

Information came as a tremendous blow as soon as parents knew that their children had a disability or chronic illness (Di Giulio, et al., 2014; Russell, 2003; Sivberg, 2002; Smith, 2003). It put them into a situation bursting with strong emotions, critical choices, interactions with different kinds of professionals and specialists, and the unending exploration for information and services (Smith, 2003) which had profound effects on the family (Di Giulio, et al., 2014). They had no choice but to address different kinds of problems and higher demand for resources (Venkatesh Kumar, 2008).

Parental Stress. Parents usually experienced increased levels of stress because of the presence of differently-abled children (Powers, 2001) and such stress was affected by some factors (Boyd, 2015). Some of the parental stress they encountered were the difficulty finding the right services (Sivberg, 2002; Smith, 2003; Stein, 2005; Williams, 2001), worrying about their children's future (Björquist, et al., 2016; William, 2001), and experiencing behavioral problems (Jones & Passey, 2004). However, stress was not good for families having children with special needs for it may cause poor adjustments to their special situations; much more when it increased over time (McGlone, Santos, Kazama, Fong, & Mueller, 2002). Parents could be burdened of their children's condition, but they had to cope with it for them to easily adjust to their situation.

In addition, the parenting care differed relatively to the amount of care needed from a normal child to a child that was more than normal (Boyd, 2015) which could increase exhaustion and stress (Beresford, Rabiee, & Sloper, 2007). The degree of parental stress was usually relative to the amount of care needed. Feeding, bathing, moving, clothing and diapering an infant were much easier physically than doing the same tasks for someone who weighs 80 pounds. The child might have more physicians and other health-care appointments than a typical child and might need close medical monitoring (Boyd, 2015). Parents also experienced varying difficulties depending on the child's stature and physical built.

Parents of differently-abled children experienced other concerns. They were worried about how their children would survive in the future. In fact, Björquist et al. (2016) enumerated five concerns of parents: distress and stress they have experienced, uncertainties of the future, their reliance for support, apprehension on how they cope, and their experiences of cohesion. These concerns were seen to be struggles in parenting their children because it also affected their way of taking care of their children knowing the presence of these concerns.

Furthermore, perceived caregiving stress of children with special needs was correlated to external and internal factors (Sethabouppha & Kane, 2005; Shin & McDonough, 2008). In addition, the level of parental stress experienced by a parent was determined by traditional gender roles (Di Giulio, et al., 2014; Shin & McDonough, 2008), frequent use of acceptance, religious and optimistic coping styles, and presence of maternal depressive, anxiety and stress symptoms (Norizan & Shamsuddin, 2010), and demographic location (Tait & Mundia, 2012). Generally, it was discovered that mothers were more affected by the children's situation (Ong, et.al, 2000; Shin, Nhan, Crittenden, Hong, Flory, & Ladinsky, 2006; Sivberg, 2002). The more existing stressors were, the higher the level of stress, contributing to the hardships of parents or even the whole family (Bender, 2008; Sethabouppha & Kane, 2005). Thus, struggles of parents were comprised of several internal and external factors.

Stress brought by having differently-abled children could lead to significant effects on parents' mental health (Ong, et al., 2000) and might even have effects on their cardiovascular, immune, and gastrointestinal systems (Miodrag & Hodapp, 2010). Likewise, Grosse, Flores, Ouyang, Robbins, and Tilford (2009) found that caregivers of children with spina bifida had less sleep, less leisure time, and fewer social activities and were twice as likely to report feeling "blue" most of the time. Additionally, when parents had less time for sleep, socializing and other leisure activities, health-related problems arose (Miodrag & Hodapp, 2010) which might include higher levels of fatigue (Smith et al., 2010). Because of the number of struggles parents experienced, it could also take a toll on their mental and physical health.

Emotional Struggles. There were different cases of emotional struggles that parents had to overcome for them to remain as inspirations for their differently-abled children. According to Boyd (2015) and Goudie et al., (2011), emotionally, parents of differently-abled children commonly experienced a gamut of emotions over the years. They often struggled with guilt (Beresford, et al., 2007; Boyd, 2015; Heiman, 2002; Sivberg, 2002; Smith, 2003). One or both parents might feel as though they somehow caused children to be disabled, whether from genetics, alcohol use, stress, or other logical or illogical reasons (Boyd, 2015; S'lungile, et al., 2015) or they blamed each other for the condition of their children (Scorgie & Sobsey, 2000). Although parents experienced different emotions, it was undeniable they succumbed to certain level of emotional stress.

Some parents struggled with “why” and experienced a spiritual crisis or blamed the other parent (Boyd, 2015). Because of their aspirations for their children, they experience severe disappointment (Boyd, 2015; Di Giulio, et al., 2014; Sivberg, 2002; Smith, 2003). Boyd (2015) stated that parents were displeased that their children would not be professionals someday. Unfortunately, there were some occasions wherein parents felt embarrassed or ashamed of their differently-abled children (Beresford, et al., 2007; Boyd, 2015). Some parents also went through different kinds of feelings such as anger and depression (Beresford, et al., 2007; Gupta & Singhal, 2004; Heiman, 2002; Smith, 2003), emptiness (Di Giulio, et al., 2014; S’lungile, et al., 2015), helplessness (Gupta & Singhal, 2004; Smith, 2003), loneliness (Di Giulio, et al., 2014; Smith, 2003), rejection (Di Giulio, et al., 2014; Smith, 2003), denial and confusion (Heiman, 2002; Smith, 2003), fear (Beresford, et al., 2007; Smith, 2003), and bereavement (Beresford, et al., 2007; Blachar & Bakar, 2007; Hill & Rose, 2009). Their painful situation indeed affected them emotionally. However, Boyd (2015) warned parents to remain positive about all aspects affecting their emotional state so that children would overcome this crisis as well.

Educational Struggles. Parents encountered more challenges especially at school according to a study in the Shiselweni region (Mazibuko, 2011). To boot, in school-related issues, parents of children with developmental disabilities dealt with complex issues related to education; either a private education must be sought, or an adequate public education must be available (Boyd, 2015). This often required close parental contact with the school system. In addition, parents had to monitor their children’s interactions with others to ensure they were not bullied. Transportation to and from school would also require a specialized bus or van, and children with severe disabilities had to be schooled at home. Thus, parents played a crucial role in giving their children quality education that would likewise benefit them as a family (Boyd, 2015; Lewis & Doorlag, 2006).

Additionally, in most growing countries, Graham (2014) reported that children with mild or hidden disabilities, which include intellectual disabilities, were disregarded in schools. Because children struggled in learning various subject areas, parents had difficulty enrolling them in any school. Moreover, differently-abled children often encountered multifaceted classroom challenges which required special attention from instructors and active engagement from their families (Ferrel, 2012). He added that even though it is vital for the learning experience of a differently-abled child. Furthermore, it was discovered in the study of Ferrel (2012) that home-school partnerships were hampered by several barriers of all persons involved; instructors and families in particular had trouble attaining children’s optimal learning experience. Unarguably, parents had to go through this strenuous process just to ensure that educational needs of their children were met.

Financial Struggles. In terms of finances, raising a differently-abled child could be more expensive than raising a typical one (Boyd, 2015; Di Giulio, et al. 2014; Goudie, et al., 2011; Stein, 2005). These expenses could arise from medical equipment and supplies, medical care, caregiving expenses, private education, tutoring, adaptive learning equipment or specialized transportation (Boyd, 2015; Kansas Special Health Care Needs Family Advisory Council, 2013). Besides, the care of the child might last a lifetime instead of a usual 18 years of support. And, parents even had to set aside money in a trust fund for the children’s care when they pass away (Boyd, 2015) since most of them were less likely to be employed (Goudie, et al., 2011; Mailick Seltzer, Greenberg, Floyd, Pettee & Hong, 2001; Reichman, Corman, & Noonan, 2004). All of those contributed to higher levels of financial struggles of parents.

Psychological Struggles. Parenting differently-abled children also brought psychological struggle, coupled with availability of resources (Smith, 2003). Di Giulio et al. (2014) stated that parents with differently-abled children had to find more inner strength compared to other parents to deal with various struggles and cope with their everyday life. However in India, according to Gupta and Singhal (2004), people looked at disability as a “tragedy” with “better dead than disabled” perspective, and foresaw disabled people as having a miserable life.

Coping Mechanisms of Parents with Differently-Abled Children

Generally, parents coped with their situation by getting all the information they could about their children (Brown, et al., 2003; Resurreccion, 2013; Smith, 2003; Wright & Taylor, 2014). According to Björquist, et al. (2016) and Smith (2003), the concerns faced by parents of differently-abled children could be minimized through experience and support of people who could guide and give them hands-on aid. In the Philippine context, Resurreccion (2013) discovered that the best practices of parents in coping with children's autism were classified as "instrumental" and "emotional". Example, for instrumental, parents constantly procured knowledge about autism, and for emotional, they gave unconditional love (emotional). Thus, it could be implied that in order for parents to cope with struggles they encountered, they must work hand-in-hand.

Right Information. It is essential for parents to be fully knowledgeable of their children's condition. In that way, they would be able to know how to act accordingly when an emergency occurred. Parents should get information about their children's disability, the services that were available, and the specific things they could do to help their children at maximum extents (Trute, Hiebert-Murphy & Levine, 2007). Moreover, right information about the latter's condition was considered a critical part of parenting care. Parents could gain right information by seeking assistance on other parents. Also, right information could be obtained through the internet (Smith, 2003). Having the right information also meant learning the terminology in order for the parents not to be hesitant about their children's condition. Finding programs that would help their children was another way of finding right information for it allowed parents to get the right data on how to take care of their children (Gona, et al., 2016; Smith, 2003). Furthermore, Brown, et al., (2003) also discovered that parents could gain right information through reading materials written by and for parents who experienced such phenomenon.

Support Groups. It was discovered that one of the coping mechanisms of parents was getting any form of support or information from other parents who experienced the same situation (Brown, et al., 2003; Nahial, et al., 2011; Sivberg, 2002; Smith, 2003). Parents looked for other parents who also have differently-abled children so that they could seek assistance from them. They could involve themselves in support groups in order to know the insights and thoughts of other parents (Smith, 2003). Within such groups, parents could share information, emotions, practical support and concerns with one another. By doing this, parents were able to gain strength to combat feelings of isolation, confusion, and stress (Brown, et al., 2003). However, the support groups were not only limited to other parents in different families; it could also be a parent's partner. Brown, et al. (2003) stated that the relationship of parents was a determining factor of their family's well-being, so parents should take care of each other while they, too, were in the process of taking care of their child. Parents should also make time for each other. And, they should recognize that they were not alone—that they had other people to rely on, and other parents who fully understood their situation.

Professional Help. To help parents in raising their children with special health care needs (CSHCN), Drummond, et al., (2012) found that they were doing better when their children were in a health care home. Moreover, parents who coped better recounted that the care given to their children was family-centered and parents were more contented with communication for they received enough care coordination. The literature on the adaptation of families of children with special needs repeatedly indicated that it was important for service providers to understand family belief systems, both in a general sense and entity. Researchers documented the importance of understanding families' worldviews, values and spiritual beliefs and day-to-day priorities and concerns (King, et al., 2009). Because each family system was unique, each family might have different coping strategies. Hence, professionals should know what coping strategies were helpful for each family. One should not assume that one specific strategy would work well for all families. They should identify family sources of support and promote the

utilization of both formal and informal support systems. Also, nurses who worked with parents must understand how to assist the mothers in coping with their stressors. To make this possible, nurses could help parents realize their abilities and strengths, identify problems, develop problem-solving strategies, and identify new coping strategies (Hockenberry & Wilson, 2014; Woodgate, Ateah & Seccol, 2008). The professional-parent relationship was also very important. While professionals could suggest ways to help a differently-abled child and offer information regarding the child's disability, parents were the real experts on their child's likes and dislikes and how he/she communicates. Parents and professionals must work together concerning their child's level of care, as well as individual and family needs. Professionals should also direct their attention towards what was helping the parents cope with the added stressors of raising a differently-abled child (King, et al., 2009; Sivberg, 2002).

Educational Strategies. Once parents recognized that their children had delay in growing, they engaged in various approaches. Nevertheless, in the aspect of education, Smith (2003) identified different strategies parents employed when they learned that their children had developmental delay.

In the field of learning, families had various choices on how to deal with circumstances with their children. Additionally, Elkins, Van Kraaynoord, and Jobbling (2003) stated that parents had different decisions on how to deal with their children's condition in the aspect of education. Parents had different wants for their children which ranged from the desire of inclusion; some favored inclusion if there were additional resources, and the minority wished for special placement. Moreover, parents only reported a few negative attitudes to inclusion. Even so, this was not a general view. There were some parents who still wanted an in-service education for their children as a part of inclusion. In support to this, Yan (2014) stated that many of the parents acknowledged the pros of sending their children with special needs to regular schools together with normal kids. On the other hand, some parents, about 44.8%, still believed that it was better if they sent their children to special schools. Nonetheless, in the study conducted by Janus, Kopechanski, Cameron, and Hughes (2008), it was reported that the impact of the disability on the family having a differently-abled child who was already in school was less than average. In addition, the parents of such children also expressed lower sensitivity to quality of care than parents whose child was yet to enter school which then resulted to delayed school-based support.

Method

Following the protocols and standards in conducting qualitative study, this paper explains the details of the different components of the method being used.

Research Design

We conducted this qualitative study using a phenomenological approach. This approach was primarily focused on the lived experiences of people (Groenewald, 2004). It aimed at deeply exploring the meaning, importance and structure of personal experiences by taking into account the people involved (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2011). It also focused on knowing what happened to the lives of the people and how they experienced it (Creswell, 2012). In this study, we explored on the lived experiences of parents having differently-abled children, particularly their struggles and coping mechanisms.

Participants

Fifteen (15) parents having children with disability were involved in this study. As emphasized, participants of a study should be those who could give the best information as stated in the research questions (Creswell, 2009), and should possess experiences that are parallel to the phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004). Particularly, we included in this study those parents in either public or private schools offering Special Education (SpEd) for differently-abled children. Moreover, participants were only limited to those who have children with inborn disabilities which can either be a genetic disorder, mental illness, speech and language impairment, or mobility impairment. Excluded were those who have children with disability caused by accidents or by other means.

Sampling

In this study, we used purposive sampling for it allowed us to get the information we needed from the people who could give accurate details to us. Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative studies because informants need to be tied with the objectives of the study (Palys, 2008). Likewise, it helps researchers arrive to a certain conclusion wherein the information can only be purposely given by a set of participants who undergo a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In line with this, we only selected parents of children with special needs based on the set criteria. Moreover, 15 participants were interviewed in the study since Creswell (2007) pointed out that the number of participants might involve one (1) (Dukes, 1984) to 25 (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Data Sources

The data needed for the study were given by the informants through a Key Informants Interview (KII), drawn from the questions from the interview protocol. Interviews enabled the researchers to discover the actual experiences of persons (Kvale, 1996). However, the source of data of the prior and supporting information of the study, particularly in the introduction and review of related literature, were obtained from different online journal articles and from books.

Data Collection

In order to collect the data we needed, we performed several steps required in the study as suggested by Creswell (2007). The first step was searching for the persons who were suitable to be informants in the vicinity of Davao del Sur, Philippines, taking into consideration the given inclusion and exclusion criteria. Moreover, Creswell (2007) accentuated the need to prepare all essential papers such as letters of approval. So, we wrote letters asking permission to conduct the study, including letters to participants. We explained properly the purpose and significance of the study to the participants for them to better understand why we conducted the study. In addition, we assured them that their true identity would not be divulged and anonymity would be strictly observed through the use of coding. Also, we ensured that informants voluntarily and willingly participated in the study which was documented through consent forms. During the interview, we took down important details and relevant information through note-taking and use of audio recorder for proper documentation of the in-depth interview. Lastly, in order to avoid misplacement and loss of data, backup copies of the files were made.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

After conducting the interviews, the data were clustered in a systematic manner and were analyzed using thematic analysis. This analysis involved the process of classification of themes within the given information (Boyatzis, 1998). We used a table suggested by R. Tudy and I. Tudy (2016), a slight modification of the technique by Anderson and Spencer (2002) and the method suggested by Colaizzi (1978). The table contained four columns for significant statements,

participants' code, formulated meanings and recurring themes. We read the transcribed texts of the responses and selected significant statements. From the significant statements, we formulated meanings and identified recurring themes.

Trustworthiness

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative study, we strictly observed credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability which were emphasized by Guba (1981).

Credibility. Ensuring the credibility of this study was one of our utmost priorities. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) deliberated that among the four factors of trustworthiness, credibility is the most important. Furthermore, credibility involved checking whether the data presented were accurate translations from the responses of the informants (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). To observe such, first of all, we made sure that informants were comfortable enough for them to openly share their experiences to us. It was also essential that participants were qualified to give the information we needed for they have lived experiences about it. In addition, the questions in the interview protocol for the Key Informant Interview were validated by a set of credible persons who were experts in qualitative studies. As regards accuracy and congruency of information, we employed the member-checking method wherein the participants were able to validate our translation of their answers. Since the goal of this research study was to describe the phenomenon in the eyes of the participants, we encouraged them to evaluate the integrity of the results and we also took our part in translating the actual answers of the participants into our transcription with utmost meticulousness and thorough efforts in order to come up with congruent interpretations.

Transferability. In promoting transferability, we tried our best to draw out conclusions based from the results given by the informants. This meant that generalizations might or might not be applicable to other areas. Based on definition, transferability refers to the generalization of the study which can be applied in other settings and contexts (Bitsch, 2005; Merriam, 1998). Thus, we followed the suggestion given by Shenton (2004) to provide detailed information about the context of the study to help other people understand this study through citing various authors to present the phenomenon in several fields.

Dependability. To ascertain dependability, we ensured that the study has substantial amount of objective information by describing properly the exact methods in data gathering, data analysis and interpretation as suggested by Krefting (1991). Besides, according to Shenton (2004), researchers should strive hard to make their study a reliable source for future use. Similarly, dependability has something to do with how reliable the study is (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, we provided a thorough description of how the data gathering went, especially what happened on the actual interview with the informants as proposed by R. Tudy and I. Tudy (2016).

Confirmability. As to the study's confirmability, we demonstrated findings derived from the gathered data and not based on our own opinions or feelings as emphasized by Shenton (2004). In addition, confirmability was considered to be the degree to which other people can confirm the results and is also associated with the objectivity of the study (Trochim, 2006). With this, we made sure to apply the audit trail, particularly the codes of the participants, in order for us to easily determine who said the statements as suggested by R. Tudy and I. Tudy (2016).

Ethical Considerations

Anything that would happen during the in-depth interview, most importantly the interaction of the researchers and informants, were subject to various ethical issues, including issues of privacy, honesty, openness, and misinterpretations (Warusznski, 2002). So, we made sure that the informants voluntarily participated. We also built mutual trust and understanding with them

in order to establish a supportive and respectful relation as it was stressed by Silverman (2015). Furthermore, we strictly observed the following: anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent to guarantee ethical consideration of the study as suggested by Richards and Schwartz (2002).

Anonymity. We used code names for the participants so as to prevent any revelation of identities. It was accentuated that anonymity should be highly observed so that the identity of the participants was protected (Corti, Day, & Backhouse, 2000).

Confidentiality. Confidentiality was considered to be in line with anonymity and should be sustained to the highest extent (R. Tudy & I. Tudy, 2016) and it has a goal of protecting the participant's identity (Crow & Wiles, 2008). With this, the researchers made sure that any information, including the names, places, and other details, and other personal information were kept confidential.

Informed Consent. We made sure that we got the permission from the participants in conducting the interview. Aside from the letter asking for permission, we asked them to sign the informed consent form which contained the following: purpose of the study, duration of the conduct of the whole study, including the preparations and writing the manuscript, methodology, possible benefits and risks, and explanation about voluntary involvement of the participants and their rights to withdraw from the study. The informed consent helped ensure the confidentiality of the information of the study and was a form of agreement between the researchers and the informants.

Results

The results were presented into two clusters based on the two research questions. The first part centered on struggles of parents who have differently-abled children and the second part focused on their coping mechanisms.

Struggles of Parents who have Differently-abled Children

In this study, six sub-themes were revealed as struggles of parents who have children with special needs. They were challenged communicating with the child, stressed of child's frequent sickness, troubled about child's misdemeanor, wounded with the slur of bullying and rejection, burdened financially, and strained emotionally.

Challenged communicating with the child. Most parents revealed they struggled communicating with their children having autism, and speech and language and/or hearing impairment. It was evident in the succeeding responses of informants.

A parent expressed, "Karon sa amo, sa communication kay number one jud na kay amang man siya" (*Communication is our main problem because he is mute.*)(KI1, Q1.1). A parent added, "Di siya makapagsalita." (*He cannot speak.*)(KI13, Q1.1.).

Parents also had to learn the sign language for them to communicate with the child. Another informant shared her difficulty, "Tapos ang communication kay lisod kay dapat maningkamot sad ta ug sign language." (*Communication is a challenge since there is a need for us to learn sign language.*)(KI11, Q1.2.). Likewise, parents having children with autism struggled in communicating because of their children's speech and language disabilities. Undeniably, communication was considered to be a major concern for our informants.

Stressed on child's frequent sickness. Parents were also stressed with children's physical challenges and medical needs, including frequent confinements to the hospital and check-ups. One informant, a mother of a child with speech and language impairment, sadly shared: "Katong 2012, naa siya'y sakit sa kasingkasing." (*Last 2012, she had a complex heart condition.*)(KI6, Q1.1.). Parents also reported that their children were sickly as they expressed the following:

“Kanang sauna, ang problema nako sa iyaha kay pirmi siya ma hospital kay masakiton kaayo.” (*The problem with my child before was his frequent confinement at the hospital because of being ill.*) (KI14, Q1.1.) and “Masakiton siya nga bata—ubo og kalintura.” (*He always gets sick, like cough and fever.*) (KI3, Q1.1.). Their children’s health problems, aside from their disability were additional struggles experienced by parents that caused them stress and burn out.

Troubled about child’s misdemeanor. Differently-abled children have different behaviors. They would easily cry or get mad if they could not get the things they wanted or whenever they could not do what they liked. It could explain why some parents simply provided children with things they wanted just to avoid scenes of lengthy crying or tantrums. Moreover, parents were anxious of their children’s misbehavior since they acted very hyper and stubborn. A parent of an autistic child complained, “Hyper gud kayo siya ug kung unsay gusto niya, dapat naa; ug dili mahatagan kay muhilak” (*He is so hyperactive. You should provide him the things he wants; otherwise, he would cry.*) (KI10, Q1.1.). Another parent of a child with similar disability expressed his struggles saying, “Nagkalisod jud mi karong dako na siya kay di na nimo siya mapugngan kung unsa iyang gusto buhaton.” (*Now that he has grown, we are struggling because we could no longer stop him from doing the things he likes.*) (KI15, Q1.6.).

Children with special needs also get vexed sometimes especially when they were disturbed when doing something. Another misdemeanor of the child was murmuring when they were told to do some errands. And, at times, they would even fight their parents. Furthermore, a father of a child with mental disability particularly stated that his child would not stop without getting even. “Dili siya ma yagayagaan. Kanang hilabtan siya, kailangan jud siya makabalos.” (*You could not tease him. When you do so, he really gets even at you.*) (KI5, Q1.1.). Also, three parents reported that their differently-abled children occasionally fought with their siblings. Reasons for such battles would include fighting over the television and the siblings’ childish attitude. Hence, parents’ struggles with their children could also be triggered by numerous misdemeanors.

Wounded with the slurs of bullying and rejection. Society could also inflict direct and indirect pressures to parents. With this, although some people chose to understand the situation they were going through, parents were most wounded by the fact that their children experienced all sorts of bullying and mockery depending on the environment they were in. A mother of a child with mental disability glaringly told us, “Ginabully jud siya sa gawas sa school. Mga silingan, ginaingnan na walay bout.” (*He was bullied outside the school. Our neighbors would say he is immature and childish.*) (KI10, Q1.2.). In addition, their child experienced being relatively abused by their incapability of comprehending things. Particularly, he was fooled by not giving him exact change when he would purchase something. However, a parent indicated that previous problems with bullying passed by with time.

Society also inflicted direct pressures on parents having differently-abled children. A parent explicitly shared being pressured by relatives to give importance to the child’s education. In addition, he was told by his relatives that the child should finish her studies for her to avoid being subjected to bullying and pity. Besides, parents informed us that some of their relatives did not fully accept their child and did not understand the situation they were in. The reason for their relatives’ rejection was that: “Dili daw siya katabang in the near future. Wala daw siyay pulos ug mag kina-uns.” (*He is deemed useless and incapable of giving help in the near future.*) (KI10, Q1.4.). Another experience of a parent was when the doctor questioned him for not giving attention to the child’s condition while the child was still young. Although some relatives rejected the condition of their child, there were still others who wholeheartedly accepted the child despite and in spite of his condition.

Burdened financially. Financial concern was one of the prevalent struggles parents encountered with children having special needs. Several parents expressed finances as a major concern and a struggle to their lives. A parent of a child with hearing impairment even expressed, “Financial—mao man jud na ang number one.” (*Our primary problem is financial.*) (KI3, Q1.2.). Parents expressed that finance was considered to be their problem due to the distance of their

house to the child's school since educational needs of their differently-abled child was one of the main priorities, leading them to sacrifice other priorities for the sake of their child. Another parent whose child has a learning disability even stated, "Kinahanglan jud ka mugasto para sa iyang projects para magkainteres pud ang bata mutuan." (*You need to spend money on her projects so that the child too would be eager to learn.*) (KI7, Q1.2.). Furthermore, because of expensive therapy and lack of money, a mother voiced out her struggle saying, "Wala pa pud namo na siya napa-therapy kay wala lagi kuwarta." (*We have not yet subjected him to any therapy because we do not have the money to do so.*) (KI15, Q1.2.). Lastly, some parents viewed finance as a problem because demands and needs would always be present but money was not.

Strained emotionally. Parents experienced different emotions with regard to their differently-abled children. Regrets came to their minds as they reflected on not paying full attention on their children's condition when they were still young, resulting them to become guilty. The father of a child having communication and orthopedic disabilities remorsefully said, "Sa una jud, sa amo sa akong misis, mura jud mig na guilty kay dapat sa gamay pa na siya, dapat amo na siyang napa check." (*My wife and I felt guilty for not giving much attention to her situation through check-ups when she was still young.*) (KI1, Q1.3.). A parent also encountered problems about the distressing behavior of her child which made them feel weary. There was also a feeling of disappointment and concern about the child's well-being. For instance, the child might not be able to help the family in the future. Moreover, a parent expressed being pained by the thought that her child could not assist them when she would grow up.

Some parents seemed to be pessimistic about their children, but others were not. Most parents still conveyed optimism. They did not see their children as burden notwithstanding their impairments and they fully accepted them as their children and as blessings from above. A mother, having a child with communication and learning disability wholeheartedly shared, "Hindi po ako nagsisisi sa anak ko. Ni minsan hindi ko naitanong kung bakit naging ganoon siya kasi tanggap ko kung ano man siya." (*I do not feel remorse with my child's situation. I did not even question why he is having that condition because I accept him.*) (KI13, Q1.3.).

Because parents gave extra attention to their children with special needs, they were likewise emotionally strained resolving jealousy issue felt by other children. Siblings sometimes felt neglected which could be attested by a response of a parent who said, "Ginapasabot jud nako sa iyang manghud kay naa may time nga magselos man ang iyang manghud, kay napangutan-an ko sa akoang anak nganong ginapaboran nako iyang ate. Maong ako jud nang ginapasabot sa iyaha na wala ko'y gipaboran, ug gimahal nako silang duha." (*I tried to make her sibling understand the situation because there was a time when her sibling was jealous of her. The child's sibling once asked me why I favored the child much more than her. That is why I always try to make the child's sibling understand that I am not favoring anyone—that I love them both.*) (KI9, Q1.4.). Truly, the condition of the children did not only affect their parents, but the other members of the family as well.

Coping Mechanisms of Parents in Dealing with their Struggles

Results showed eight sub-themes as regards coping mechanisms of parents: open communication, proper discipline, ample attention, faith in God, optimism, involvement in recreational activities, adjustment on finances and monetary assistance from others, and moral support.

Open communication. It was best for parents to be open towards their children about disability, their attitudes, and many other things. "Communication jud sa anak." (*There is a need to communicate with the child.*) (KI9, Q2.1), a parent of a child with communication disability accentuated. Moreover, for parents having children with such disability, they really tried to communicate with their respective children through use of hearing aids or through sign language. A parent pressed, "Dapat makatuon jud kag sign language" (*There is a need to learn sign language*) (KI9, Q2.1.) for them to be able to converse with each other. Nevertheless, discoursing with them and bestowing on their child wisdom of what they were going through was a way for them to let

their child understand their situation. They also gave counsel and advice to their child for their sake. Moreover, a parent emphasized “coordination” (KI1, Q2.3.) within and among their child for them to be able to fill the lapses they had as parents and their child’s shortcomings. Whenever their child had a problem, a parent of a child with learning disability stated, “Kung may problema istoryahan sa bana.” (*Whenever there’s a problem, my husband would talk to her.*) (KI7, Q2.4.). In addition, parents also kept on reminding their child of the things they should do such as building sense of responsibility in school. “Gina sultian jud nako na siya nga dili magbuhay og lain. Kung naa man siyay kalain sa school, akong ginaingnan nga dili lang pansinon. Kung sungogon siya kay dili pansinon” (*I always remind him not to do bad things. If he has any resentment in school, I advised him to ignore it. If he gets teased, he should neglect it.*) (KI15, Q2.2.). A parent also constantly instilled within the minds of her child what is right and wrong. Thus, communication could be a great help to the parents in coping with their difficulties for it enabled them to connect with their children.

Proper discipline. In handling children’s misdemeanors, parents expressed that they disciplined them properly. For instance, when the child got into a fight with his sibling, one informant indicated that he must separate them by all means. In handling such situation, parents shared that they had to employ necessary actions to discipline their children properly. Most parents of differently-abled children reported that they usually practiced discipline through teaching them what is right and what is not, making them understand the binary of good and evil—a way of guiding them to the right path. A mother of a child with speech and language impairment said, “Ginaingnan lang nako siya kung unsay tama ug unsay mali.” (*I would tell him what is right and what is wrong.*) (KI4, Q2.3.). Parents also reminded their children that what they did was bad and that they should not commit the same mistakes again. In this regard, an informant said, “Gina tudluan nako siya kung unsay maayo, nga dili mag-bad bitaw.” (*I train him to do right things and not do bad things.*) (KI15, Q2.2.). After all, parents had different ways of discipline but it always boiled down to teaching them what is right and telling them not to do the opposite.

Ample attention. Most parents reported that they gave more time to their children to support and give more attention to them. A parent of a child with learning disability voiced out, “Mas hatagan jud nig focus ang special kay naa jud siyay deperensya.” (*I would give her more attention because she has a disability.*) (KI8, Q2.2.). Furthermore, some parents would set aside other responsibilities just to prioritize their child. Another parent of a child with mental disability emphatically stated “Syempre sa oras, tagaan jud ang bata ug pagtagad. Byaan jud ang mga responsibilidad sa gawas if magkinaunsa ang akong anak.” (*Undoubtedly, I would give my child attention and time. I would leave other priorities behind when he needs me.*) (KI14, Q2.2.). Also, a parent said, “Mas ginauna nako akong anak kay sa laing mga butang.” (*I always prioritize my child over everything.*) (KI3, Q2.2.). Some parents also helped their children whenever they ate or took a bath. Moreover, parents gave their children ample attention by accompanying them to school because their safety was the former’s main priority. As shared by a parent, she still accompanied her child even though their home was far away from school. Another parent stated that she would go with her child up to their classroom. Moreover, in the aspect of education, other parents shared that they really motivated and helped their children with their homework. Indeed, it was truly a great responsibility for parents to give more attention to their children even though they had other responsibilities to attend to.

Faith in God. Regardless of children’s disability and despite the struggles they faced, parents still focused their lives on God. Most parents expressed that praying is one of the many ways that would help them cope with their struggles. “Wala’y imposible sa Ginoo” (*Nothing is impossible with God*) (KI2, Q2.1.). Parents emphasized that prayer is important. As one informant shared, “Sa panahon nga murag wa naka’y maduolan naa raman jud ang Ginoo andam maminaw” (*At times when you feel like the whole world is against you, God will always be there to hear your distress.*) (KI9, Q2.6.) and “Maski unsaon nato pag disiplina ug walay Ginoo wala juy pulos.” (*No matter how hard we try to discipline our child, if God is not present, everything is pointless.*) (KI11,

Q2.6.). Parents prayed and got strength from God to ease their struggles. Additionally, they also reported that they went to church to ask for guidance and to serve Him through the Eucharist as one family. Also, one parent voiced out that their family recites the Holy Rosary every day. Thus, one of the coping mechanisms of parents in dealing with their struggles was their faith in God despite and amidst all circumstances.

Optimism. Results also revealed that parents had to be optimistic to easily cope with the struggles confronting them. And, they found various ways on how to be optimistic despite the situation they were in. Parents indicated that in order to avoid stress and other emotional strains, they need to have positive outlook in life, establish their motivation, and encourage themselves as they strive in parenting their children. Secondly, parents of differently-abled children expressed they simply neglected comments and turned a blind-eye from other people who brought no help at all. A parent of an autistic child said, “Dili nako paminawon ang uban, i focus nako akong sarili sa akong anak. I reject ang ubang tao kay dili man gihapon sila makatabang.” (*I would not listen to other people [negative comments]. I would just focus on my child. I would reject other people because they were still of no help at all.*) (KI10, Q2.1.). Another parent said, “Ginapakita man nako nga dawat nako akoang anak ug lipay ko sa akoang sitwasyon. Proud man ko so dili sila makahatag ug negative nga response sa akoo.” (*I would show them I fully accept my child and I am happy with my situation. I am proud [of my son] so they cannot throw any negative response at me.*) (KI9, Q2.6.). Hence, there were several ways to be optimistic despite the struggles parents encountered.

Involvement in recreational activities. Parents took their children and the rest of the family to the mall, park or other places in order to relieve their stress. Some parents practiced this for the benefit of their beloved children. A parent stated that “Pinapasyal ko siya sa mga mall at park para hindi siya masyadong mabagot, para matutunan rin niyang makipagsalamuha sa ibang tao.” (*I would take her to the mall and park so that she would not get too weary, so that she can also learn how to socialize with other people.*) (KI13, Q2.1). Some parents also let their children play with other children or their siblings in order for them to experience joy as part of their childhood. Thus, having some physical or recreational activities and keeping their minds away from problems was an effective coping mechanism for our participants.

Adjustment on finances and monetary assistance from others. In dealing with financial struggles, the prevalent strategies as expressed by parents were adjustment on their budget and receiving financial assistance from other people. Parents adjusted their budget so that they could cater all their needs. Nevertheless, there were exemptions, specifically in situations when the child urgently needed something; parents would always find a way to provide their children’s needs. One informant said, “Mangita pud ko’g pamaagi para lang siya makaeskuela.” (*I always find a way to make ends meet so that she can go to school.*) (KI6, Q2.2.). In addition to that, another parent expressed, “Bisag unsa kalisod, kailangan jud paeskwelahon ang anak. (*No matter how hard it is, it is deemed necessary for my child to be sent to school.*) (KI4, Q2.2.). A parent stated, “Natural, nag adjust jud mi sa among budget sa kwarta. Pero kung need jud niya, pangitaan jud namo nag pamaagi.” (*It is natural to have adjustments financially. But if she badly needed something, we would always try to find ways to provide it.*) (KI1, Q2.2.). Parents had more demands financially so this resulted to their monetary adjustment.

The second way of dealing with financial problems was receiving financial assistance from relatives, society, and even government. In line with this, parents expressed that they received financial assistance from the government through the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4P’s) and the school. When asked who or what helped them in their financial struggles, a parent of a child with learning disability said, “Ang gobyerno kung bahin sa financial kay 4P’s man mi.” (*The government helps us through 4P’s (Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program)*) (KI8, Q2.5.). Receiving help from others, especially from the government was truly helpful to our parent-participants.

Moral support. Parents of differently-abled children gained moral support from a variety of people. Most parents appreciated the pieces of advice given by their relatives. As expressed by an informant having a child with communication and orthopedic disabilities “Sa relatives, maghatag sila’g kwarta pero kasagaran jud kay moral support, mabalaka jud na sila pag ma ospital na siya.” (*Our relatives would give us money but most of the time, moral support is what they provide us. They showed concerned whenever the child is admitted to the hospital.*) (KI1, Q2.7). Similarly, a parent gained encouragement from her best friend and received pieces of advice from neighbors. One example is a response from a parent (KI3, Q2.7.), “Akoang bestfriend, ginatabangan ko niya in terms sa akoang emotions.” (*My bestfriend helps me in handling my emotions.*) Additionally, parents have their spouses, too, with whom they could seek moral support. Likewise, a parent sadly shared, “Yung asawa ko lang ang aking karamay sa mga bawat problema na aming nararanasan kalakip sa aming anak.” (*My spouse is the only person I can count on whenever we encounter a problem regarding our child.*) (KI13, Q2.5.). Hence, parents of differently-abled children were still grateful that they were not alone in dealing with their struggles.

Discussion

Parents with differently-abled children experienced a range of struggles. They were challenged communicating with the child, stressed of child’s frequent sickness, troubled about child’s misdemeanor, wounded with the slur of bullying and rejection, burdened financially, and strained emotionally.

We discovered that parents were challenged communicating with their children, especially those with speech, language and/or hearing impairment and autism. They exerted much effort to learn the sign language so as to converse with their children. Likewise, they had to furnish information in a simple language that their children could understand. Undeniably, parents were willing to go extra mile and to learn various strategies no matter how difficult they were just to have an effective communication with their child. It was also evident in a study that communication was crucial for learners with cerebral palsy (CP) (Bourke-Taylor, Cotter, Johnson & Lalor, 2018). In fact, teachers were trained before dealing and communicating with children having special needs, the more for parents who spent most of their time with them. They had to educate themselves as well. Moreover, it would lessen their burden when their beloved children belonged to any health care program (Drummond, et al., 2012).

Aside from the fact that their children had disabilities, our parent-participants were stressed of their frequent sickness. Not counting their usual check-ups, they still had to confine their children to the hospital because of other sickness. This poor health condition of children caused parents to worry. Actually, it was one of the most draining and difficult tasks parents could handle. Moreover, according to several studies, when a child was diagnosed with chronic illness, it could be particularly devastating to learn (Di Giulio, et al., 2014; Russell, 2003; Sivberg, 2002; Smith, 2003). In addition, knowing that their children had a disability and health or chronic problems, it was not normal for parents to feel depressed (Brown, et al., 2003). Indeed, unstable health condition of children could be stressful to our participants. Nonetheless, parents still managed to handle their emotions at times of despair and addressed their children’s medical condition so that they themselves and their children could experience greater well-being.

Additionally, parents shared problems with their children’s misdemeanor. Parenting a differently-abled child could be a challenge particularly in managing the child’s behavior. Parents found their children’s behavior to be quite unpleasant at times; and their children had a tendency to be hard-headed, disobedient, and stubborn. These disturbing behaviors of children caused exhaustion to parents (Jones & Passey, 2004). However, parents dealt with their children’s misdemeanor through disciplining them. They found discipline as their most important responsibility. Amidst all these struggles, parents still managed to discipline their children’s actions by showing them what is right and wrong, what is acceptable and what is not. And, no matter what burden and ordeals came to the parents, they were still confident and committed to always give their children essential discipline.

The parents also cried within upon seeing how their beloved children with special needs were bullied and rejected by other people. Other people scoffed at them or fooled them because

of their incapability to understand things. It saddened our participants more when they shared that some of their relatives whom they expected to support them were the ones who could not fully accept the situation of their children. It truly pierced their hearts as well when their children were rejected by them since they had the notion that their differently-abled children could never help them in the future. Our participants appeared to have fully accepted their children's condition. On the contrary, a study by Boyd (2015) found out that parents were displeased that their children would not be professionals someday. In addition, there were some occasions wherein parents felt embarrassed or ashamed of their differently-abled children (Beresford, et al., 2007; Boyd, 2015). Those unwelcoming behaviors of some parents in other studies were opposite to our parent-participants.

Our participants were bleeding for pity and sympathy of their children which ignited them to admit their children for continuous therapy sessions. Yet, the question on where to get the hard cash to pay for the cost was like a double-edged dagger that pierced their bleeding hearts. No wonder why parents were burdened financially. Likewise, various studies reported that raising a differently-abled child could be more expensive than raising a typical child (Boyd, 2015; Di Giulio et al., 2014; Emerson, 2007; Goudie et al., 2011; Stein, 2005). In addition, these expenses could arise from medical equipment and supplies, medical care, care-giving expenses, private education, tutoring, adaptive learning equipment or specialized transportation (Boyd, 2015; Kansas Special Health Care Needs Family Advisory Council, 2013). Scramella, et al. (2008) in their Family Stress Model attested that most parents who have children with special needs encountered severe economic pressures due to the demands of their situation. Similarly, it was found to be true in the context of the study because it was discovered that most of our participants struggled financially. Parents had to provide the needs of their differently-abled children (Gona, et al., 2016), especially in the aspect of education.

Caring for children with special needs might also last a lifetime instead of a usual eighteen (18) years of support. Parents might even have to set aside money in a trust fund for children's care when they pass away (Boyd, 2015) since most of them were less likely to be employed (Goudie, et al., 2011; Mailick Seltzer, et al., 2001; Reichman, Corman, & Noonan, 2004) which would contribute to higher levels of financial struggles.

All those struggles that our participants faced made them strained emotionally. Some felt guilty about their children's disability. They thought the condition of their children could have been better if they had taken actions early through check-ups. Similarly, studies pointed out that these emotions prevailed because of regrets which eventually became guilt (Beresford, et al., 2007; Boyd, 2015; Heiman, 2002; Sivberg, 2002; Smith, 2003). Furthermore, our participants felt weary of their children's misbehavior, worried about their future, and stressed of resolving jealousy conflict with other children. And, these strong emotions experienced by parents were affirmed by Smith (2003). Moreover, other researches found akin emotions that parents had to hurdle: weariness because of children's distressing behavior (Jones & Passey, 2004), disappointment on incapability of helping their family in the future (Boyd, 2015; Di Giulio, et al., 2014; Sivberg, 2002; Smith, 2003) and concern about their children's well-being (Beresford et al., 2007; Smith, 2003). Moreover, though not everyone felt this crisis, some parents also experienced the struggle of asking "why" their children had to experience their disability (Boyd, 2015).

No matter how heavy or how hard the struggles they might encounter, parents would still be able to survive through them. And, they managed to cope with them through: open communication, proper discipline, ample attention, faith in God, optimism, involvement in recreational activities, adjustment on finances and monetary assistance from others, and moral support. It could be further explained by McCubbin and Patterson's (1983) Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) Model which posited that parents would always learn to adjust and adapt to their situations.

Even though communication was considered to be a problem, having open communication with their children was considered a coping mechanism because parents considered an open and honest conversation with their children a good place to start dealing with their struggles. In fact, through open communication with their children, they were also able to impose discipline to them. Furthermore, through it they were able to properly explain to other siblings their situation and

address jealousy issues among them. They gave their children, especially those with special needs, pieces of advice. And, they counseled them, too, in order to have a harmonious day-to-day life. In a study conducted in Netherlands, the “Video-feedback Intervention to promote Positive Parenting and Sensitive Discipline for Child Care (VIPP-CC)” was proven effective to caregivers since it made them manifest better behavior towards care-giving (Werner, Vermeer, Linting, & Van IJzendoorn, 2018, p.1). Likewise, parents had to obtain correct information for them to be more knowledgeable on taking care of their children (Gona, et al., 2016; Smith, 2003). Undeniably, when they employed proper approaches towards child care, positive outcome would likely occur.

Aside from open communication and proper discipline, parents also highlighted giving ample attention to their children. This was also affirmed in the study conducted by Ferrel (2012). Giving attention was a big responsibility for all parents, but for parents having differently-abled children, it was a bigger responsibility for them because they had to give not just the average amount of attention but ample. Particularly, our participants shared they accompanied their children to and from school every day just to ensure their safety, which somehow contributed to their struggles, making them exhausted and weary. They also prioritized their children over anything else, sacrificing other priorities. There were times when they would prioritize their children’s needs over the needs of other family members. The child, with special needs might bring about challenges in the family, but still, he/she was equally considered to be important. And because of this, it was etched that differently-abled children were still deeply loved and taken care of by their parents despite all the circumstances and hardships parents went through.

Nevertheless, parents were not the only ones who should adapt to children’s disability. Life changed for the entire family. Since they focused primarily on their children with special needs, other family members might feel neglected, most especially other siblings. It was discovered that other children in the family often felt unnoticed and jealous of their differently-abled sibling because he/she got all the attention of their parents, and their relatives. They felt like they were no longer part of the family because all of their parents’ time was given to the child with disability. With this, it implied that parents were not the only ones affected by the differently-abled children, but the siblings as well.

Despite and amidst all the struggles parents have been through, they still decided on living a God-centered life (Gona, et al., 2016). All the more, they clung to God for comfort and remained faithful in serving Him. In addition, our participants gave so much significance on leading their children to the Lord through prayer, going to church and reciting the Holy Rosary. Truly, parents committed everything to the Lord and regarded Him as the center of their lives for them to surpass all the challenges. In fact, the struggles they encountered strengthened their faith in God.

One of the major struggles experienced by the parents was they were wounded with the slur of bullying and rejection of their children. In the same way, it was discovered that differently-abled children were discriminated, labeled and bullied (Link & Phelan, 2001). And, parents also felt the pain of their children whenever they were bullied and rejected. In other words, the feeling of their children reverberated to them. Additionally, they also experienced different kinds of pressure from the society—their relatives and other people. They were often pressured to do things well for their children’s welfare. Some parents reported that other people, including relatives, did not fully accept their situation, which in return, affected them and their mindset. Despite all those adverse experiences, parents also stated that it is better to be optimistic (Boyd, 2015; Smith, 2003)—to just neglect other people’s negative comments about their children and their situation and to focus purely on giving more love and attention to them. Moreover, parents also engaged themselves and their family with recreational activities to ease their minds and just simply bond with each other, enjoying each other’s company. Although, there were others who put nothing but pressure and additional struggles to the parents, there were still some who were willing to help them through their advice and acceptance of the child.

Since parents had difficulties in financing their child, their condition and their needs (Boyd, 2015; DeRigne, 2012; Di Giulio, et al., 2014; Goudie, et al., 2011; Parish, et al., 2008; S’lungile, et al., 2015; Stein, 2005; Williams, 2001), it was just apt for parents to adjust and manage finances properly. Similarly, our participants dealt with their financial problems through accepting financial assistance from others. Parents reported being aided by one of the government’s program, Pantawid

Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4P's). To boot, the 4Ps of the government was effective and was etched in helping families who have differently-abled children. Aside from receiving assistance from others, it was necessary for parents to budget their money wisely so as to cater and suffice not only the needs of their differently-abled children, but the whole family as well.

In handling situations, parents often dealt with counseling. They had to find more inner strength through the help of others (Di Giulio et al., 2014). As they went through tough times, parents knew they were not alone—that they had their spouse, their family, their relatives, and the society, who, mostly, were willing to lend a hand and give solace and comfort in times of despair. Aside from God, our participants also found comfort from the moral support they received from others. Furthermore, they deeply appreciated the pieces of advice they heard from them. This concurred with the Model of Simultaneous Counseling and Training developed by Gupta, et al. (2014). Though training was not particularly eminent in the responses of the participants, most parents reported counseling by which they were able to recognize that they should take care of their children and raise them well, give importance and attention on their behaviors and education. Also, parents found it necessary to communicate with their children, to counsel them, even though some of the parents have children with communication disability. In such cases, parents taught themselves sign language in order to converse with their children effectively.

Limitation of the Study

This study focused only on struggles and coping mechanisms of parents with differently-abled children in Davao del Sur. The results of the study were only limited to the responses provided by the fifteen (15) informants. It excluded the experiences of the siblings of children with special needs and other members of the family who were likewise affected by their condition.

Implication of the Study

Based on the results and the discussion of the responses of the participants, it can be implied that parents have their own different ways of coping. For parents having difficulties with their children's misdeed, they could maintain and inculcate discipline to their children through open communication. Moreover, it is essential to inculcate to their children what is good and what is not, and to reprimand them, if perceived to be necessary. Also, the study further called for parents to give ample time to their children and to look after their welfare and safety and to monitor them all the time. And, since in their children's cases, expenses were greater than normal, it would be best for parents to have proper budgeting. Besides, it would not diminish parents' self-worth if they asked for other people's and government's financial assistance. They could seek moral support from others, too, whenever they felt down or whenever they needed some pieces of advice from them.

The government could also coordinate with the Department of Education (DepEd) and increase the number of educational institutions offering Special Education Program so that more differently-abled children would not be deprived of their rights to education. Likewise, the government had to continue and strengthen further the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4P's) since it greatly helped the parents financially. The government could also implement more programs, conduct symposia and seminars, and make policies which could make the lives of parents with differently-abled children easier, understanding the fact that they went through a wide variety of struggles in their situation.

In addition, the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) would not only focus on the children with special needs but also set eyes on the children's parents. The council could also create concrete programs that would help the parents cope with the struggles they faced, such as conducting small gatherings within a community for parents with differently-abled children, wherein they could share all their experiences and insights. Through this, other parents could learn how other parents apply techniques that were deemed effective in their current situation.

Furthermore, for other researchers, they could conduct studies particularly on how parents dealt with siblings of their differently-abled children since it revealed that parents did not only have struggles with their children having special needs, but also with the other siblings in the family.

Concluding Remarks

Having children with special needs was never easy. Parents had to give more, exceeding the usual care they could extend to their children. And, struggles were inevitable for our parent-participants. They were challenged communicating with the child, stressed of child's frequent sickness, troubled of child's misdemeanor, wounded with the slur of bullying and rejection, burdened financially, and strained emotionally. A range of struggles experienced by the parents impacted them and their family. However, their painful experience never altered their love for their children.

In spite of the struggles brought by their children's condition, parents still managed to cope with them by applying different techniques such as open communication and proper discipline, ample attention, faith in God, optimism, involvement in recreational activities, adjustment on finances and monetary assistance, and moral support from others. In addition, coping mechanisms applied by parents were geared towards child's well-being. And, they served as their weapons in overcoming their day-to-day struggles. Lastly, the upshots of the struggles would always depend on parents' decisiveness to manage them against all odds and the extent of all the efforts they were willing to give. After all, their children, despite their disability, are gifts from God.

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Article Homepage: <http://rpo.cjc.edu.ph/index.php/slongan/>



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TO CITE THIS ARTICLE :

Tudy, I, Villasor, H.D. (2017). English language learning, strategy use and academic performance of college students, *Slongan*, 3(1), 30–47.

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English Language Learning, Strategy Use and Academic Performance of College Students

Ida G. Tudy¹ & Harry Dave B. Villazor²

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Education, English Language Learning, Strategy Use, Academic Performance, Correlation, Philippines

English language remains to be the dominant language use and acceptable globally. However, in school, language teachers observed that students have difficulty in learning this language. The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between English language learning and strategy use and academic performance of college students. It employed descriptive correlational design. Questionnaires in English Language Learning and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) were used to gather the data. Results revealed that the levels of English language learning and strategy use were both rated as high. On the other hand, the academic performance in English 121 (Speech and Oral Communication) of the college students was developing. Furthermore, a significant relationship was found between academic performance and strategy use, but no relationship existed between academic performance and English language learning. It implied that students' use of strategies in learning the language would matter much about their English 121 grades. However, despite a high rating in their English language learning, it did not have any relationship with their academic performance. For educators, the result of the study could give a clear indication of the importance of helping students master the use of strategies in English language learning to maximize their skills and knowledge, and to improve their academic performance.

Introduction

The use of English language continues to gain global acceptance in business, education and other sectors in society. English was a sort of unstoppable linguistic movement (Demon-Heinrich, 2005). Researchers found how this language is gaining prominence, and they even regarded it as a medium of communication of people across national borders (Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 2006; Jenkins, 2000; Kachru, 1992; McArthur, 1998; Smith, 1983; Widdowson, 1994). In fact, it was agreed to be the operational language of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Kirkpatrick, 2012). Acknowledging its value across the globe, English language learning, indeed, became a necessity. Thus, it should be highlighted in classroom instructions, along with strategy use, to help students become efficient communicators in whatever context they engage.

"Appreciate your parents. You never know what sacrifices they went through for you."

—Anonymous

Known to be globally understood and accepted language, English would influence the social, cultural, political and educational aspects (Phillipson, 2004). And the rate of migration and immigration from countries to countries has a notable impact on the world. This phenomenon was facilitated chiefly because of individuals' capacity to communicate using the same language. Tusda (1994) also described English as the language of science and technology, globalization, modernization, internationalization and transnationalism. Indeed, English was considered a vital medium of communication in the global arena.

The importance of language went beyond the letters. Many associated it with one's identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2008; Mantero, 2007). Likewise, scholars considered it as a revelation of a person's identity to the world. It is a "dimension of linguistic inquiry" (Omoniyi & White, 2006). Deep within a person's pride is his belongingness to a particular culture. However, expression of the richness of one's culture had often become more vivid when expressed in language. Hence, learning English is not learning a language in isolation but learning and understanding other culture as well.

English was unquestionably significant, yet, many studies revealed how challenging it was to learn this second language. As Tsui (1996) emphasized that when not properly received, English language could be a cause of failure, frustration, and low esteem. In fact, there were findings of the study which found English subject as the source of tension and social division between elite and the masses in Nigeria, Tanzania, and Kenya (Bamgbose, 2003; Bisong, 1995), South Africa (Kamwangamalu, 2007), India (Annamalai, 2005; Bhatt, 2005), Hong Kong (Li, 2002) and the Philippines (Tollefson, 2000). And, English language teachers all over the world had continually dealt with this scenario.

In academic milieu, proficiency in English was not exclusively beneficial for English subjects per se. There were studies which could correlate English language learning to the academic performance of students in other academic areas (Aina, Ogundele, & Olanipekun, 2013; Saquing-Guingab, 2015). In the study conducted by Aina, Ogundele, and Olanipekun (2013) it was revealed that those learners who were performing well in their English subjects were the ones who did better in their other subjects, particularly, in science and technology. Similarly, students' English language usage (ELU) was highly linked to their academic performance in other areas (Saquing-Guingab, 2015).

There had been attempts to study the different factors related to English language learning. For instance, a study examined motivation, anxiety, global awareness and linguistic confidence about language test performance. It was found that selected psychological factors were contributory to test performance (Zheng, 2010). Similarly, Thang et al. (2011) argued that if the students perceived the relevance of the academic area in the school, they had a positive attitude towards it. And, if they recognized the importance of the English subject, they had a motivation to learn about it. Likewise, other studies explored on the relationship between age and motivation (Julkunen & Borzova, 1997; Nikolov, 2000), motivation and sex differences (Carr & Pauwels, 2006; MacIntyre et al., 2003), demographic profile and motivation (Dörnyei, 1990; Gardner, 1988; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Warden & Lin, 2000) and motivation and language (Lukmani, 1972; Spolsky, 1969; Yamashiro & McLaughlin, 2000). These studies provided explanations as to how students learn the language given the many factors which in one way or another affect their perception and performance. Furthermore, these studies suggested that if students had a positive attitude towards learning the language, then they would tend to have high academic achievement.

While there were studies that associated English language learning to academic performance, there were also others that could connect strategy use on students' learning of English (Alhaisoni, 2012; Chien, 2007; Liu, 2014; Xu, 2012). Learning strategy could refer to how one performed a given responsibility (Schumaker & Deshler, 2006), particularly, how an individual thought and

acted when planning, executing and evaluating performance. Furthermore, strategies required individuals to decipher what could work best for a task (Alexander, Graham, & Harris, 1998). One factor that contributed to learners' use of strategy was his/her knowledge about its purpose. And, such would be influenced by what and how it would be employed (Chinn, 2006).

In the Philippines, English language teachers were held responsible for the decline of "English standards" (Wilson, 2009). Specifically, Wilson (2009) considered the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) results of the Filipinos who were looking for jobs in other countries for 2008 alarming. It turned out that Malaysians got higher overall mean scores in English than Filipinos who were well-known for their ability in the English.

Not just Filipino learners articulated problems regarding English language learning. Even among Korean college students who studied here in the Philippines revealed that they had difficulty both in their English subject and in the actual use of this language while talking to Filipinos (de Guzman, et al., 2006). Similarly, foreign students enrolled in the Universities here in the country expressed that they also experienced apprehension in their English language learning (Lucas, Miraflores & Go, 2011). However, they were able to compensate for this negative feeling by employing a strategy enhancing their vocabulary.

In Cor Jesu College, language teachers observed that oral communication in English was a problem among students. When asked to recite in class, the majority would resort to language switching or language mixing. It implied lack of command of the English language. And, it could be a manifestation of "internal mental confusion" (Lipski, 1982, p.1). This observation was an affirmation of the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT) result of the first-year students, last school year 2014–2015. The OLSAT result revealed that most of the students' rating in verbal and nonverbal competency ranged from average to disadvantaged.

Recognizing the merits of the previous findings and the desire to deepen understanding in this field, the researchers would investigate English language learning and strategy use in relation to the academic performance of the second-year students of Cor Jesu College (CJC). The conduct of this study would also serve as a way of knowing well the target respondents as English language learners. The more teachers become knowledgeable of their students, the better they could help them to learn. Furthermore, awareness of the students' efficient or inefficient use of strategies would make language teachers identify areas to highlight in their English classes. Moreover, there was no research study conducted yet which focused on English language learning, strategy use and academic performance of second-year CJC students.

Review of Related Literature

This part contains different literatures and studies which would serve as the foundation of the study, particularly English language learning, strategy use and academic performance.

English Language Learning

English became an international language for several reasons. As pointed out by Kachru and Nelson (2001), English is considered as universal language since those who are using it are not mainly native speakers but also those non-native speakers. Yilmaz and Ozkan (2016) supported this idea when they argued that the English language has continuously increased its role as an international language which eventually resulted to the varieties of English for both native and non-native English-speaking countries around the world.

The ideas above gave rise to the perception that there is a need to study this language and identify its features for one to use it effectively. Teachers perceived that students must

embrace the English language especially its diversities and they need to have intercultural awareness if they are to successfully engage in intercultural communication (Yilmaz & Ozkan, 2016). Likewise, several studies revealed students' perception of their lack of competence in English. They believed their incompetence in the language hampered them in participating actively in class and any academic interaction (Barker, Child, Gallois, Jones, & Callan, 1991; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000).

Strategy Use

Strategy use, as indicated by Oxford (1989) has six indicators, namely: cognitive, metacognitive, memory, compensation, affective and social. There are two types of cognitive strategies: general and specific (Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995). Learners apply general cognitive strategies across disciplines, like summarizing or setting goals to be accomplished. But, specific cognitive strategies focus on a kind of task, like drawing a picture to help one see how to tackle a problem in Physics. Metacognitive strategies have to do with management and monitor of learning (Schraw et al., 2006). They give awareness to the learners in the learning process and make them know when and what strategy to use in a task. Hence, they plan, monitor and evaluate in advance (Zhang & Goh, 2006). As regards memory related strategy aids, learners connect new concepts from second language (L2) to first language (L1), but with not so deep understanding of it. Memory strategy is used to retrieve information through acronyms, rhyming, images, total physical response and flashcards (Oxford, 2003). Compensatory strategy, on the other hand, is employed to solve problems when limited linguistic resources are provided (Fraerch & Kasper, 1983). Affect relates to emotions and feelings that an individual is enduring while learning which may influence his/her motivation (Doryen, 2001; Hurd, 2008). However, according to White (2008), this can be regulated through affective strategies (Oxford, 1990) by reducing anxiety, encouraging oneself and monitoring one's emotion. When one uses it successfully this can be beneficial to his/her learning (Benson, 2001). And, the social strategy is done through asking questions, getting verifications, having clarifications, asking help in doing language tasks and exploring cultural norms. In so doing, social strategy gives an avenue for learners to deal with others and gain an understanding of the target language (Oxford, 2003).

Generally, strategy use played a vital role in learning. Many researches were conducted to compare proficient and less proficient learners (Chan, Burtis, Scardamalia & Bureiter, 1992; Chi, Bassok, Lewis, Reiman & Glasier, 1989). These studies showed the level of difference of strategy use between novice and expert learners. Also, another set of studies revealed that students who employed new strategies were more likely to perform better than those who did not (Graham, MacArthur, & Schwartz, 1995). Likewise, in the study of Langer (2001), it was reported that higher-performing schools focused on strategy instruction than those low-performing schools; thus, helping students learn effective cognitive strategies. Indeed, the use of strategies had been proven to be effective.

In language classes, strategy use had also been proven valuable to contribute an increase in students' academic performance (Alhaisoni, 2012; Chien, 2007; Kirmizi, 2014; Liu, 2014). The study of Chien, (2007) in Taiwan linking rhetorical strategy use on students' writing in English revealed that there was a good effect on students' academic performance. Also, Liu (2014) pointed out that training students to employ strategies, especially, on the use of dictionaries made them become independent learners and helped them progress in their minor English subject. Similarly, English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners of Saudi who maximized the use of different strategies were found to have likely had high proficiency (Alhaisoni, 2012). Moreover, when more vocabulary learning strategy was employed by Turkish EFL learners, the higher their academic achievement and wider their vocabulary had become (Kirmizi, 2014). With these, strategy use indeed aid students to improve their academic performance.

Academic Performance in English

Due to the increasing popularity of English language, schools around the world offered English as one of their course. Because of globalization, English gained its prestige as the international language (Wu, 2013). However, there were several claims about the difficulty of learning the language. Learning meant not only knowing words and uttering those in any form of communication. Learners had to consider its origin and its culture. As Yilmaz and Ozkan (2016) posited, learning a language necessitates learning the culture of its origin. Through this, students would be able to gain a critical understanding of their own culture and the culture of the second language they were learning. Furthermore, they would be able to compare values and beliefs of the two languages. Thus, to have a successful intercultural communication, intercultural awareness would be necessary (Korzilius, van Hoft & Planken, 2007).

When students would not successfully learn the features of English language, the difficulty of learning it would take place. In fact, several studies investigated on the challenges encountered by learners studying English as a second language. Studies revealed that problems were related to culture, academics, and pressures (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006). When students did not know how and when to use the language, then failure would likely occur. These difficulties were present because of lack of knowledge of the language (Wu, 2014). If one wanted to be competent in English, he/she should orient himself/herself to this language. Studies revealed that students' competence in English served as the basis for students to succeed academically (Barker, Child, Gallios, Jones & Callen, 1991; Church, 1982; Wintergerst, DeCapua & Verna, 2003; Ying & Liese, 1991). However, students' incompetence in English hampered them to perform well in their academic pursuits (Barker, Child, Gallois, Jones & Callan, 1991; Robertson, Line, Jones & Thomas, 2000).

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Krashen's (1977, 1981, 1982) monitor hypothesis. This hypothesis pointed out that checking oneself would be expected when one learned or acquired the language. Based on this theory, the researchers argued that strategy use, as shown in Oxford's (1989) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), came in when students applied their knowledge when speaking and writing, and when they adjusted in their output. And, this understanding emanated from their formal learning in language classes. Thus, when they came up with the desired output in the scholarly context, their academic performance also improved. There were likewise studies that could connect strategy use on students' learning of English (Chien, 2007; Liu, 2014; Kirmizi, 2014). Employing strategies, particularly on writing (Chien, 2007), on use of dictionaries (Liu, 2014), and on learning vocabulary (Kirmizi, 2014), significantly improved students' language learning, and made them become highly proficient in English.

Conceptual Framework

This study would determine the influence of English language learning and strategy use on the academic performance of the second-year students. As shown in Figure 1 below, the first independent variable of the study was students' English language learning with three indicators, namely: reasons in learning English, feelings about English lessons and feelings about learning English. The second independent variable was strategy use, which has six indicators, namely: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social while the dependent variable was the academic performance of students based on their final grade in English 121. The researchers argued that students' English language learning and strategy use influence their academic performance.

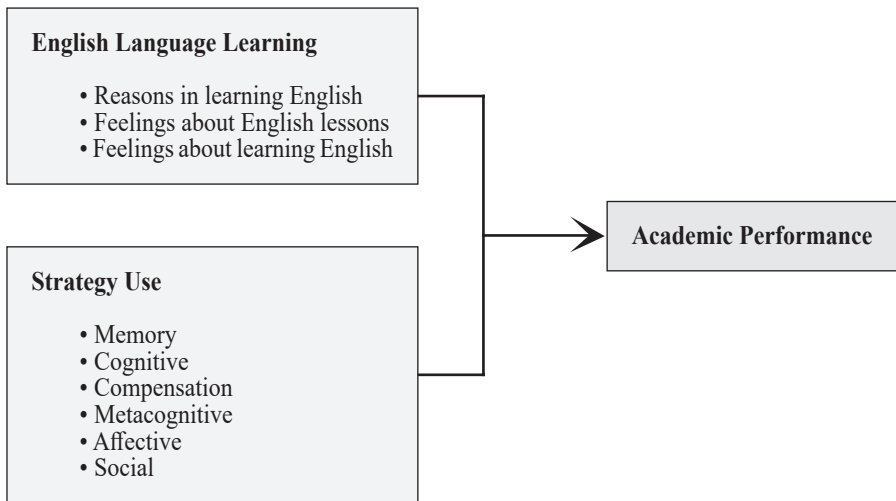


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was to investigate the English language learning, strategy use and academic performance of the second-year college students in Cor Jesu College, Digos City. Specifically, this study sought to determine the levels of English language learning, strategy use and academic performance of students. It also investigated if there exists a relationship between English language learning and strategy use and academic performance of the respondents.

Method

This study employed descriptive correlational design. The researchers used the correlational design to see the influence of English language learning and strategy use to academic performance. As Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (1993) pointed out, correlational research had to do with the gathering of data with the purpose of finding out the level of relationship that exists between or among variables involved in the study. The respondents of the investigation were second-year students of Cor Jesu College, Digos City. The proponents of this study utilized two standardized questionnaires, specifically, Questionnaire about English Learning for English Language Learning and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) by Rebecca Oxford (1989) for strategy use. Moreover, the researchers used the students' final grades in English 121 (Speech and Oral Communication) for academic performance. In identifying the respondents of the study, the researchers employed stratified random sampling. Permission from the dean of college and program heads of the different divisions was secured. After getting the approval, the investigators conducted a survey to the respondents. In analyzing the data, for the levels of language learning, strategy use and academic performance, mean score were used. In identifying the relationship between English language learning and strategy use and academic performance, Pearson-r Product Moment Correlation was employed.

Results

This study presented its results in four parts, namely, English language learning, strategy use, academic performance of the second-year college students in Cor Jesu College and the relationship between English language learning and strategy use and academic performance of the respondents. A total number of 189 second-year college students participated in the study particularly Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA), Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT), Bachelor of Science in Computer Science (BSCS), Bachelor of Science in Accountancy (BSA), Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering (BSCE), Bachelor of Science in Electronics and Communications Engineering (BSECE), Bachelor of Science in Computer Engineering (BSCPE) and Bachelor of Science in Accounting Technology (BSAT).

Table 2. Level of English Language Learning

	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Descriptive Rating
Reasons in Language Learning	188	4.32	.508	High
Feeling about English Lesson	188	3.97	.494	High
Feeling about Learning English	188	4.31	.569	High
Total	188	4.20	.524	High

Results of the investigation revealed that the levels of language learning among college students as measured in the three components were relatively high. As shown in Table 2, the reasons in language learning had a mean score of 4.32 almost the same with their feeling about learning English with 4.31 and feeling about their English lesson with 3.97. The standard deviation of each component falls within the ± 1 standard deviation which showed that students' responses were generally concentrated near the mean scores of each factor.

Table 3. Level of Strategy Use

	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Descriptive Rating
Memory	188	3.20	.635	Moderate
Cognitive	188	3.65	2.268	High
Compensation	188	3.58	.631	High
Metacognition	188	3.58	.747	High
Affective	188	3.21	.717	Moderate
Social	188	3.50	.745	High
Total	188	3.45	0.865	High

On students' level of strategy use, the mean scores revealed relatively moderate and high. Students had the highest level of the use of cognitive strategy although the standard deviation showed dispersed responses of students indicating that many were using this strategy on the extremes of the Likert scale.

The cognitive strategy was then followed by compensation and metacognition strategies, then social strategy, affective and lastly memory strategy. All strategies except the cognitive were concentrated near the mean score with standard deviations less than ± 1 indicating that students' responses were similar.

Table 4. Level of Academic Performance in English 121

Course	Mean	% Equivalent	N	Std. Dev	Descriptive Rating
BSBA	2.29	75–79%	28	.402	Developing
BSIT/BSCS	2.40	75–79%	28	.506	Developing
BSA	1.52	85–89%	31	.240	Proficient
BSCE/ECE/CPE	2.36	75–79%	46	.500	Developing
BSAT	2.24	75–79%	56	.997	Developing
Total	2.18	75–79%	189	.714	Developing

Table 4 showed the final grades of the respondents in their English 121 course during the first semester of S.Y 2015–2016. The grades were interpreted using the school's grade equivalence used by the entire college department. It observed 1.0 as the highest grade, 3.0 as the lowest passing grade and 5.0 as the failing grade, based on the 60% passing grade. Table 4 illustrated the mean scores and percentage equivalent of the students in the five programs using the K-12 program standard assessment. The students with the highest grades were those coming from the BS Accountancy program with a proficient academic performance followed by those in the BS Accounting Technology, then those from the BS Business Administration, next from the BS Civil, Electronics and Computer Engineering and lastly from the BS Information Technology and Computer Studies. The standard deviation of each program showed a relatively concentrated response near the mean score as it fell within the ± 1 SD range.

Table 5. The relationship between Strategy Use and English Language Learning and Academic Performance.

		Strategy Use	English Language Learning	Grades
English 121 Grades	Pearson Correlation	.204**	.096	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.196	
	N	187	184	188

In determining if significant relationship existed between academic performance and strategy use and English language learning, Pearson-r Product Moment Correlation was employed. Table 5 showed an r-value of .204 which revealed a significant relationship between academic performance and strategy use. Hence, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis. This was supported by the p-value of .005 which was lower than the 0.05 level of significance. It meant that the performance of the students in English 121 was positively related to their strategy use.

On the other hand, no significant difference was found between academic performance and English language learning as shown in Table 5 with an r-value of .096 and p-value of .196 which was higher than the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the researchers accepted the null hypothesis.

Table 6. Correlation between Academic Performance and Strategy Use

		Grades	Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Meta-cognition	Affective	Social
Grades	Pearson Correlation	1	.050	.098	.233**	.301**	.039	.176*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.494	.184	.001	.000	.598	.016
	N	188	187	187	187	187	187	187

Since relationship was significant, further analysis was done to include the six components of strategy use and their relationship towards academic performance. Table 6 revealed that only three components had shown a significant relationship to academic performance. These were compensation with a value of .233, metacognition with .301, and social with .176. These were supported by the p-values of .001, .000 and .016 respectively. Hence, the proponents rejected the null hypothesis. It suggested that among the six components of strategy use, only these three had a positive relationship with academic performance while memory, cognitive and affective did not show statistical result proving their significant relationship with academic performance. With r-values of .050, .098, and .039 and p-values of .498, .184, and .598 respectively, the null hypothesis was accepted. With these results, the researchers hypothesized that these three strategies did not matter to the performance of the students in English 121.

Discussion

Investigating on students' English language learning, strategy use and academic performance could be essential for both teachers and learners. The results of the study could help teachers design effective strategies for their language classes. Likewise, this investigation could heighten students' awareness vis-à-vis these variables. Hence, they would know what areas to improve as second language learners.

As to English language learning, results showed that respondents always thought of essential reasons why they had to learn English (Table 1). They perceived that learning English could be their gateway to an improved academic standing not just in the English subject per se but to other academic areas as well. The studies of Ogundele and Olanipekun (2013) and Saquing-Guingab (2015) affirmed it. They revealed that high performing learners in their English subjects were also those who achieved better in their other subjects specifically, in science and technology (Ogundele & Olanipekun, 2013). Likewise, students' English language usage (ELU) highly linked with their academic performance in other areas (Saquing-Guingab, 2015). Moreover, respondents also believed that they had to learn English because it would be their access for better opportunities in life like making friends and dealing with other people from different countries, appreciating more of the literary pieces, entering their preferred universities, studying abroad, and landing a high paying job. In fact, research revealed that immigrants were more likely to handle hazardous tasks in the workplace than English native speakers because of inferiority in their command of this language and academic achievement (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2009).

Aside from those important reasons in learning the second language, the findings showed that respondents had a positive feeling about their English lessons and about learning

English. They enjoyed lessons and activities given in this subject especially if these involved pronunciation, games, and songs. Porto (2007) stressed out the value of learners' assessment of own thoughts and feelings which served as the key to their independence in language learning milieus. Besides, he emphasized teachers' role in finding out the learners' thoughts and beliefs because these influenced their participation in language activities (Porto, 2007). Respondents were happy and satisfied towards learning the second language as a consequence of their appreciation of its use within and beyond the four corners of the classroom.

About strategy use, students had the highest level of cognitive strategy. It implied that the following were always true to the student-respondents: saying or writing new words several times and writing notes, messages, and reports in English, practicing the sounds and using the words of the second language in different ways, watching TV shows spoken in English and making summaries of information heard or read in this language. Abbas and Baharestani (2014) presented similar findings on strategy use wherein cognitive strategies were mainly employed by Iranian EFL (English as Foreign Language) learners. However, as Escribe and Huet (2005) suggested that upholding cognitive strategy entailed goals to be well-matched with the task needs.

The cognitive strategy was then followed by compensation and metacognition strategies, then social strategy, affective and lastly by memory strategy. These results revealed that making guesses to understand unfamiliar words, presuming what other speakers will say next, using gestures during conversation or other related words instead of unknown words and reading without looking up for every word were almost always true of the students. These compensation strategies were found to be valuable by both high and low performing learners to recompense for their insufficient know-how in the target language and to consistently push them to continue writing (Cabrejas-Peñuelas, 2012). Also, both of the above-mentioned similar groups of learners in Iran, frequently employed these compensation strategies than the others (Khosravi, 2012). Furthermore, respondents were conscious on how they learn and think which implied their use of metacognitive strategies. In a study by Schleifer and Dull (2009), they correlated metacognitive traits of students with their success in accounting classes. It also showed that respondents often employed social strategies in language learning. Thus, they practiced and learned English through their dealings with people around them. In fact, it pointed out that for superior emotional intelligence (EI), more use of social and affective strategies was needed (Rastegar & Karami, 2013).

The student-respondents moderately used affective and memory strategies. It meant that these affective strategies such as awareness of their feelings, relaxing whenever there was tension, sharing with others what they felt while learning and encouraging themselves to speak in English despite the fear of making mistakes were somewhat evident to them. Like social strategies, emotional intelligence and affective strategies also have positive relationship (Rastegar & Karami, 2013). Lastly, memory strategies in the forms of thinking link between what they knew and new things they learned, using new words, rhymes and flashcards, and connecting sounds of new words and image for fast recall of those words, were also true to them about half the time. And, as highlighted by Pérez Sánchez, and Beltrán Llera (2007) teachers have roles to play to help improve the memory of students. They further stressed out the use of technology to attain such. Another study on strategy use among female English major students in one university in Qatar obtained almost similar results (Riazi, 2007). From the most to least employed strategies were: metacognitive, cognitive, compensation, social, memory, and affective.

Concerning academic performance, students from different courses such as BSBA, BSIT, BSCE, and BSAT were rated developing in English 121. This finding revealed that students at this level of proficiency had only possessed the minimum knowledge, skills and core understanding. Therefore, they needed help throughout the performance of authentic tasks. On the contrary, BSA

students were proficient which meant that they had developed the fundamental knowledge and skills and understanding and could transfer them independently through authentic performance tasks. In the framework of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), vocabulary learning was found to forecast Academic English Proficiency (AEP) of the learners in writing (Roche & Harrington, 2013). While Chermahini, Ghanbari and Talab's (2013) investigation showed that learning styles could foretell students' educational achievement in English.

Moreover, the investigation revealed that students' strategy use particularly compensation, metacognition, and social strategies had a significant relationship with their academic performance in English 121. This finding corroborated Krashen's monitor hypothesis. Students acquisition and application of communication strategies were reflected in their academic performance. Several researches supported it since they found out that learners' use of strategies could be associated with their progress in English (Alhaisoni, 2012; Chien, 2007; Liu, 2014; Xu, 2012). Moreover, there were studies which concluded that learners who applied new strategies were those who likely performed well (Graham, MacArthur, & Schwartz, 1995). Also, strategies, particularly on instruction, had been found to have a higher impact on Korean students' academic achievement in their language classes (Joo, Seo, Joung, & Lee, 2012).

This study further posited that English language learning had nothing to do with the students' academic performance in English 121. The low (developing) performance of students in their English subject could be the reason for the lack of significant relationship between these two variables. However, teachers must do something. They should exert much effort to help improve the performance of the students. This finding could negate Saquing-Guingab's (2015) study which highly correlated students' usage of the English language to their academic performance. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Carhill, Suárez-Orozco, and Pérez, (2008), it was revealed that students' dissimilarity in their level of aptitude in the English language partly associate with their distinct personalities or traits.

Conclusion

Findings revealed that all components of students' English language learning were relatively high. Hence, it showed that students were aware of how they think and feel about English language learning. Being conscious of the reasons why they had to learn English was a plus factor for them since it could make their involvement in their language classes worthwhile. However, their English language learning has nothing to do with their academic performance in English 121 (Speech and Oral Communication). Unfortunately, students from these different courses namely: Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA), Bachelor of Science in Information and Technology (BSIT), Bachelor of Science in Accounting Technology (BSAT) and Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering (BSCE) were ranked as developing in their academic performance in English 121. It further implied that students merely acquired minimum knowledge and skills in the subject. Therefore, they needed full support from their teachers throughout the accomplishment of tasks. Furthermore, researchers found out that in their strategy use, students were relatively moderate and high. Moreover, their performance in English 121 was positively related to their use of strategies, particularly, compensation, metacognition, and social.

For educators, the result of the study could give a clear indication of the importance of helping students master the use of strategies in English language learning to maximize their skills and knowledge, and to improve their academic performance.

Recommendation

Based on the results of this study, the researchers recommended the following: English language teachers must focus on low performing students since their progress could be mainly dependent on the assistance extended to them. Moreover, they can devise efficient strategies to help improve the academic performance of the students in English 121. This investigation proved that strategy use had a significant relationship on academic performance; therefore, teachers can highlight various strategies which students can readily employ in different communicative milieus. They can train learners to use compensation strategies which will help them independently manage language learning difficulties and avoid lapses in communication. Also, teachers must encourage learners to utilize metacognitive strategies which can heighten their awareness on how they can learn best and make them monitor their progress. Also, they can give activities which will allow learners to interact with one another using the English language and capitalize on their social strategies. Lastly, school administrators might as well consider the strict implementation of the “English Speaking Policy” in the different offices inside the school campus so that learners have more opportunities to practice the use of the target language.

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Employers' Satisfaction on the Performance of New College Graduates

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TO CITE THIS ARTICLE :

Tudy, R. (2017). Employers' satisfaction on the performance of new college graduates, *Slongan*, 3(1), 48–63.

Link of this article:

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Employers' Satisfaction on the Performance of New College Graduates

Randy A. Tudy

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Education, Employer Satisfaction, Job Performance, Character, Computer skills, Descriptive, Philippines

Employers' feedback on the performance of new college graduates is an important piece of information that schools must consider to determine the relevance and responsiveness of their curriculum, programs, and services. This study aimed to determine the satisfaction of employers on the performance of new college graduates of Cor Jesu College, Philippines. It employed descriptive research design. The respondents were purposely chosen who were managers and personnel in-charge of 40 companies and institutions in Davao region. Results revealed that all 19 skills (Specific job-related knowledge, Specific job-related skills, Oral communication, Written communications, Comprehension, Math skills, Computer skills, Critical thinking, Problem solving, Research and analysis, Teamwork, Organization and planning, Time management, Quality of work, Productivity, Creative and Innovative, Adaptable, Responsible and Character) received highly satisfactory rating. Moreover, it can be argued that technical skills, such as computer skills, and soft skills (character) were among the top skills that the employers recognized among the graduates of Cor Jesu College. The results affirmed the effectiveness of the school's rigid training in response to the skills needed in the industry. The implication of the study on the continuous improvement in the curriculum, programs, and services are discussed.

Introduction

The success of any school depends on the employability and performance of its graduates in the workplace. Students get a degree with the expectation of landing a job which would give them advancement and earning potential (Kolhede, 1994). On the part of the employers, they expect rigid training in the school that would prepare graduates for the world of work (Hesketh, 2000). Similarly, it is the same desire for any school for that matter. However, the problem of unemployed graduates, due to not possessing the required skills, poses a huge challenge not only to the graduates but also to school authorities. Alarmed by the number of unemployed graduates and job mismatches, the Commission of Higher Education (CHED) provided a list of priority college courses (Bacani, 2014). Prior to this list, CHED released a moratorium order on selected courses with a surplus of graduates (CMO 32, 2010). Just like the problem of job mismatches, there is also a concern regarding the readiness and qualification of new graduates to plunge themselves into the real world of work. For example, in a review of several publications from Australia and the United Kingdom, Cumming (2010) concluded that many of the graduates lack appropriate employability skills. Osmani, Weerakkody, Hindi, Al-Esmail, Eldabi, Kapoor, and Irani, (2015) found similar findings in their review of literature related to employability. The lack of adequate practical preparation for those who just got their degree is a growing concern

(Andrea, 2018; Bikson, 1996; Fabris, 2015; Green & Seymour, 1991; Levenburg, 1996; Porter & McKibbin, 1988; Tymon, 2013). These reported concerns included complaints by employers about the lack of basic skills and needed competencies expected particularly in the entry-level position (Candy & Crebert, 1991; Cappelli, 1992; Carnevale, Gainer, & Meltzer, 1990; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). In short, the industry expects so much from the academe to produce qualified graduates, but the gap remains evident.

Several attempts were done to address these problems such as government intervention (Knight & Yorke, 2003; Yoong, Don & Foroutan, 2017), school curricular reforms (Gardiner, 2014; Manik, Qasim & Shareef, 2014), and development of employability models (Clarke, 2017; Cole & Tibby, 2013; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). However, there is no single response, or a combination of identified interventions can be effective in a particular setting. Hence, the constant feedback from employers is still a very much valuable information especially for schools and other training institutions. In this study, it was argued how a survey on employers' satisfaction could provide reliable information for the service provider, schools in particular, in assessing and improving its programs and services to meet the needs and demands of the industry. The findings of this study re-affirm the body of literature on the significance of both technical and soft skills as essential requirements for employees to possess to be useful in the workplace.

Review of Related Literature

Employer's feedback provides solid data for schools and institutions regarding the readiness and performance of their graduates. Also, several studies showed the different facets related to employability and employer's satisfaction. In this article, the following related to employability and employer's satisfaction concepts are discussed—preferred attributes by employers, models of employability, school-industry-government thrust on employability, and employer's satisfaction as feedback to schools.

Preferred Attributes by Employers

Hiring new employees is one crucial task for any employer. That is why in the absence of in-house training program, employers prefer applicants who can quickly work independently (Kelley & Gaedeke, 1990; Webster & Taylor, 1995). It is understandable because if applicants are accepted they are expected to take the job without much supervision. However, this is not always the case. For example, a study conducted in four European countries found that employers were not very confident as to the abilities of graduates when it comes to key knowledge areas and key generic competencies (Azevedo, et al., 2012). Many countries have developed a comprehensive account about the use of skills and how organizational practices develop these skills or eradicate skills imbalances and low-skills traps (OECD, 2012a). In fact, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) emphasizes the three pillars on skills strategy, namely, developing relevant skills, activating skills supply, and putting skills to effective use (OECD, 2012a) to make graduates employable and ready for work. These interventions are what employers desire to have employees who possess the necessary skills or attributes suited for the job they are hired for.

Though companies have different job qualifications, the debate continues about employability and what employers want (Bills, Di Stasio & Gërkhani, 2017; Cumming, 2010; Cunningham & Villaseñor, 2016; Frankham, 2017; McQuiad & Lindasy, 2005; Tymon, 2013). According to the Confederation of British Industry (1999, as cited by Bridgstock, 2009), employability means “the possession by the individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers and customers” (p. 32-33). Several attempts were done to provide a broader understanding of it. For instance, Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin and Zehner (2013), in reviewing literature on employability, found two levels in understanding this concept. These were specific employability factors (e.g., listening skills, writing skills,

academic performance) and higher-order categories. Under higher-order categories, they found five factors, namely, soft-skills; problem-solving skills; job-specific functional skills; pre-graduate experience; and academic reputation. In a similar note, Osmani et al. (2015) reviewed 39 employability related articles published in Scopus journals and found 53 graduate attributes. The most notable ones were communication, teamwork, problem-solving, technological skills, creativity, interpersonal skills, leadership skills, self-management and flexibility/adaptability.

In response to the concern of preparing students for the world of work, there had been ventures in investigating employee attributes that employers look for (Boland & Akridge, 2004; Norwood and Henneberry, 2006). Some studies found out that abilities to communicate, analyze and solve problems, work as a team member, tackle unfamiliar problems, and plan one's work are skills needed in the labor market (Borin & Watkins, 1998; GCCA, 1999 in Levin & Tempone, 2002). Aside from being ready for work, employers also preferred applicants who are recommended by others (Belwal, Priyadarshi & Al Fazari, 2017). Specifically, more and more attention is given to soft skills (Archer & Davison, 2008; Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2010; Cunningham & Villaseñor, 2016; Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017). In their study covering more than 100 employers, Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin and Zehner (2013) also found that employers considered soft-skills as the most important and academic reputation as the least. Regardless of which particular attribute the bottom line lies on the readiness of employees to take on the job with appropriate skills in carrying it.

Models of Employability

Since there were different studies highlighting several attributes on employability, there were also attempts to bring together different literature of which some models were identified. For example, Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) developed the Career EDGE Model which stands for Career (developing learning), Experience (work and life), Degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills, Generic skills, and Emotional intelligence. Just like other models, the proponents of this model argued that all components must be present to increase the prospects of one's employability. As to how schools should prepare their students, Knight and Yorke (2003) created the USEM model which stands for Understanding (good subject matter), Skills, Efficacy beliefs (self-theories) and Metacognition. These authors believed that this model encompasses the different components to be integrated into the school curriculum to capacitate students for the job ahead. Bridgstock (2009) developed a model which highlighted the importance of self-management (appraisal and knowledge of self) and career building skills (skills necessary to navigate and advance in the world of work) to enhance employability and a life-long career. He argued that, apart from the list of necessary skills identified by employers, employability demands mastery on the career-building process.

Considering the previous models, Cole and Tibby (2013) developed a framework they believed as cohesive and all-encompassing. It involved four stages—Stage 1: Discussion and Reflection (creating and defining a shared point of reference); Stage 2: Review/Mapping (what has been done); Stage 3: Action (sharing and enhancing existing practices and identifying gaps); Stage 4: Evaluation (identifying and measuring success). The framework and its accompanying questions were helpful for improving the curriculum. The proponents believed on the merit of this framework particularly for reflection and implementation of measures related to employability. Most recently, Clarke (2017) developed a framework of employability which included four key dimensions, namely, human capital (skills, competencies, and work experience), social capital (networks, social class and university ranking), individual behaviors (career self-management and career-building skills), and individual attributes (personality variables, adaptability and flexibility). The model helped understand the individual, institutional and contextual factors on employability which are important considerations for schools to look into.

The aforementioned models were influenced by different theories on employability, most notably are the human capital theory and labor market theory. Using human capital theory and dual labor market theory, Berntson, Sverke, and Marklund (2006) argued that job applicants

look at the condition of the labor market in their perceived employability while at the same time gain confidence through their acquired education. However, moving away from the centrality of human capital theory to employability, Tomlinson (2017) created the Graduate capital model which included the following aspects: human capital, social capital, cultural capital, identity capital, and psychological capital. Hence, employability has become a complicated matter that needs a comprehensive approach, a challenge that schools face.

School-Industry-Government Thrust on Employability

The industry relies so much on the training of applicants from their respective training institutions. Hence, schools find ways to make their curriculum responsive to the needs of the industry (Baker, 2009; Gardiner, 2014; Manik, Qasim & Shareef, 2014; Nilsson, 2010; Nair, Patil & Mertova, 2009; Bennett, Dunne & Carre', 2000). Schools are integrating employability skills as part of the attributes of their students (Nilsson, 2010; Baker, 2009). Schools conduct tracer studies and employer satisfaction survey to assess if their training are in line with the demands of the industry. The results of these studies help schools evaluate their existing programs and make necessary reforms. These initiatives are likewise a response to government regulations of making sure schools are producing graduates who are ready for work (Andrews & Russell, 2012; Belwal, Priyadarshi & Al Fazari, 2017; Knight & Yorke, 2003; Yoong, Don & Foroutan, 2017). This School-Industry-Government link is crucial in ensuring not only employability but also effective and efficient programs which produce a human workforce capable of contributing to national development. It is a framework wherein each entity plays its role for a more significant cause of nation building.

Employer's Satisfaction as Feedback to Schools

A satisfaction survey is always geared towards identifying areas for improvement (Kujala & Vaisanen, 1997; Verbeek et al., 2001, 2005). It is also the goal of Cor Jesu College in commissioning this project to see if what it offers is aligned with what is needed or expected in the industry. If there is a discrepancy, the school can immediately address and adjust. Hence, satisfaction survey, like this present project, is seen as the congruence between what employers' expectations and the actual outcome (Buck & Curely, 2010).

In the local level, the Philippines is still facing an enormous jobs challenge (Chua, 2013). As one of the premier Catholic educational institution in Southern Mindanao, Cor Jesu College is concerned with providing the right and well-trained workforce for the country. For the past six decades, the school produced graduates who were making a difference in their respective fields. To move forward and to advance excellence, being one of the school pillars, Cor Jesu College would like to know how relevant and responsive its curriculum, program, and services to the needs of the industry. Thus, an employer satisfaction survey was conceptualized. This study, therefore, is anchored on the Discrepancy theory by looking at how satisfied are the employers of the graduates of Cor Jesu College. The result of the study will be beneficial for the school to have a glimpse of the performance of its graduates while providing feedback for curricular evaluation and enhancement. On the part of the employers, this will give them the chance to provide a feedback mechanism to the school for the latter's improvement. In return, they will be assured of having employees who meet their expectations and standards.

Objective of the Study

This study was conducted to determine the satisfaction of employers with the performance of employees who are graduates of Cor Jesu College.

Method

This study employed descriptive research design. The data used in this study came from a survey conducted among the managers or personnel in-charge of companies or institutions located in the Davao region. They were purposely chosen since their companies or institutions had employees who were graduates of Cor Jesu College from school years 2008-2009 to 2013-2014. There were 52 identified companies or organizations representing different sectors, but only 40 returned the survey questionnaire or 77% retrieval rate. A research questionnaire was adopted from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities of Ontario, Canada (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2003). One item was added which was Character. The questionnaire was given to the employers with an envelope wherein they could place the answered questionnaire and sealed it to maintain confidentiality. Mean score was utilized in analyzing the data.

Results and Discussions

The results showed that all the 19 skills received a highly satisfactory rating. Ranked first was computer skills (4.450). Rounding up to top 5 were character (4.41), teamwork (4.38), adaptable (4.32), and comprehension (4.27). Tied for rank 6th were quality of work and responsible (4.20) followed by organizing and planning (4.16). Also tied, for ninth spot, were specific job-related knowledge, math skills, and productivity (9.33). Other skills tied in rank were oral communication and written communication (4.08) for 12th spot and specific job-related skills and creative and innovative (4.05) for 14th spot. The other identified skills, which also received a highly satisfactory rating, were problem-solving (4.0), critical thinking (3.97), research and analysis (3.95), and time management (3.92).

Skills	N	Mean	Rank	Description
A. Specific job-related knowledge	40	4.10	9.33	Highly Satisfactory
B. Specific job-related skills	39	4.05	14.5	Highly Satisfactory
C. Oral communication	40	4.08	12.5	Highly Satisfactory
D. Written communications	40	4.08	12.5	Highly Satisfactory
E. Comprehension	40	4.27	5	Highly Satisfactory
F. Math skills	39	4.10	9.33	Highly Satisfactory
G. Computer skills	40	4.45	1	Highly Satisfactory
H. Critical thinking	39	3.97	17	Highly Satisfactory
I. Problem-solving	40	4.00	16	Highly Satisfactory
J. Research and analysis	40	3.95	18	Highly Satisfactory
K. Teamwork	40	4.38	3	Highly Satisfactory
L. Organization and planning	38	4.16	8	Highly Satisfactory
M. Time management	40	3.92	19	Highly Satisfactory
N. Quality of work	40	4.20	6.5	Highly Satisfactory
O. Productivity	40	4.10	9.33	Highly Satisfactory
P. Creative and Innovative	39	4.05	14.5	Highly Satisfactory
Q. Adaptable	40	4.32	4	Highly Satisfactory
R. Responsible	40	4.20	6.5	Highly Satisfactory
S. Character	39	4.41	2	Highly Satisfactory

Interestingly, the employers gave the highest rating for the graduates of Cor Jesu College on their computer skills. These computer-related know-how are one of the core 21st century skills (Chu, Reynolds, Tavares, Notari & Lee, 2017; Häkkinen, Järvelä, Mäkitalo-Siegl, Ahonen, Näykki & Valtonen, 2017; van Laar, van Deursen, van Dijk & de Haan, 2017), which are in demand in the workplace (Frey & Osborne, 2017). Cor Jesu College, following the required

competencies in all curricular programs, provided students with training and laboratories where students can enhance their computer skills. Most importantly, the school ensured students' readiness for work by capacitating them with computer-related skills.

Though the top-ranked skill is technical, the next four top skills belonged to the soft skills-character, teamwork, adaptable, and responsible. Based on the literature, much emphasis is now given to the employees' soft skills (Archer & Davison, 2008; Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2010; Cunningham & Villaseñor, 2016; Gibert, Tozer & Westoby, 2017; Oladokun & Gbadegesin, 2017; Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017), and organizations have to invest in developing these skills (Robles, 2012). An employee's character demonstrated in having a pleasant personality creates the positive atmosphere in the workplace. It is what employers are looking for among their employees (Archer & Davison, 2008), which could lead to innovative outcomes and influence positive organizational change (Madrid, Patterson, Birdi, Leiva & Kausel, 2014; Avey, Wernsing and Luthan, 2014). In this study, character was the number two with the highest mean. This is an affirmation of the school's Catholic education grounded on the values of the Gospel as expressed.

Another soft skill is the ability for employees to work in a team. Teamwork is one of the most cited attributes that employers look for in their employees (Azevedo, Apfelfthaler & Hurst, 2012; Tsitskari, Goudas, Tsalouchou & Michalopoulou, 2017). It is one of the general student attributes (GSA) that schools would like to develop among students (Hassan, Zamberi, Zamberi, Khalil, Wasbari, & Kamarolzaman, 2013). Employers are concerned with how employees work together efficiently and effectively as a team (Robles, 2012); hence, they look for skill where an individual exhibits an attitude of working with a group. In a survey by the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) among 233 employers representing 750,000, soft skills like teamwork were identified as the top skills being considered very important (Archer & Davison, 2008). Good character was seen by the respondents of this study as manifested in the workplace by the graduates of Cor Jesu College.

Other skill related to this was adaptable. Being adaptable requires one to also possess problem-solving skills and creative thinking (Carnevale & Smith, 2013). Being adaptable also means that the employers saw how Cor Jesu College graduate adapt to new situations and demands by applying and/or updating their knowledge and skills. It is one important attitude because having high adaptability decreases employee's perception of abusive supervision (Mackey, Ellen III, Hochwarter & Ferris, 2013). Both adaptability and teamwork are related to having a good character or interpersonal skills, which are categorized under higher order category meta-skills (Finch, Nadeau & O'Reilly, 2012). With the fast changing demands in the workplace, being adaptable is a must for employees to respond appropriately in helping the organization moves forward and be in tune with the recent developments.

Being responsible was among the top 10 skills in this study, another skill closely related to the other top soft skills. This trait is one of the skills for Cor Jesu College education. Aside from regular course offerings, the school offers a lot of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to help form students to become responsible. Responsibility is among the personal skills identified as employability skills (Claxton, 2007; Cleary, Flynn & Thomasson, 2006). However, being responsible cannot be easily determined in the application process. The fact that this skill is present among the graduates of CJC revealed a solid foundation of these graduates in their educational formation.

As employers look for employees who possess good traits like soft skills, they also need them to possess certain intellectual or thinking skills. The next skill, ranked 5th in this study, was comprehension. It is another positive feedback for Cor Jesu College because employers put much value on this particular skill (McLester & McIntire, 2006). An analysis of 28 studies revealed that employers looked for socio-emotional and higher-order cognitive skills than basic cognitive and technical skills (Cunningham & Villaseñor, 2014). Comprehension skill is highlighted in the work of Carnevale and Smith (2013) focusing on the workplace basics referring to what employees need and what employers want. It is also listed as one of the skills for a globally competitive workforce (Bates & Phelan, 2002). Hence, developing more on this skills makes the employees effective and can compete globally, something that Cor Jesu College

envisions among its graduates.

The next set of skills belonging to top 10 were quality of work, organization and planning, productivity, Math skills, and specific job-related knowledge. On the quality of work, it is always expected for any employee to perform at the optimum level. As to organization and planning, these are two skills that need to be developed by employees depending on the nature of the job, and these skills are better learned in the field. However, both schools and employers emphasize the ability to plan, organize and prioritize work as top on the list of skills (Adams, 2013). When it comes to productivity, the results showed that Cor Jesu College graduates are productive in completing assigned tasks. As to Specific-job-related knowledge, they demonstrate specific technical skills related to the work being done. For Math skills, they apply math techniques with the accuracy required to solve problems and make decisions. Especially those in the business sectors, employers expect a certain level of Math competencies among entry-level applicants (Tengesdal & Griffin, 2014)

Tied for a mean of 4.08 were *written communication and oral communication skills*. These skills are as important as other skills (Zahra, Nazir, Khalid, Raana & Majeed, 2014). It means that the graduates write and speak in a clear, concise and correct manner. Several studies reported on the importance of communication skills for employees to be successful in their job and to facilitate the success of the organization they are work with (Ahmed & Redha, 2014; Sarudin & Noor, 2013). Communication skills are usually determined during job interviews which give the employer an idea if the applicant is fit for the job (Posthuma, Levashina, Lievens, Schollaert, Tsai, Wagstaff, & Campion, (2014). However, in this study, the employers were asked how the graduates performed concerning communication skills in their work. Since most of the respondents are working in the Philippines, English is for sure a predominant language. Mastery of the English communication skill is an advantage for employees (Mohamed, Radzuan, Kassim & Ali, 2014). It is even considered as the most important competency for college graduates as they enter the workplace. In particular, the sub-skills in oral communication skills are following instructions, listening, conversing, and giving feedback (Maes, Weldy & Icenogle, 1997).

Next to communication skills were *Specific-job-related skills* and *Creative and Innovative* with the same mean score of 4.05. On the one hand, job-specific skills are listed among intermediate assets on the framework of employability (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). It means that the graduates use specific technical skills related to the tasks assigned to them. They create innovative strategies and/or products that meet identified needs. These are good indicators of excellent employees. On the other hand, being creative and innovative is another skill that employers expect from their employees. The skills mentioned above such as good character, adaptable, teamwork, and communication skills are factors that facilitate and encourage employees to be creative and innovative. There are studies which proved that relationship with supervisor and co-employees and work commitment influence creativity (Chang, Jia & Cai, 2013; Jang & Kandampully, 2013). Thus, it can be argued that creativity in this sense also means the commitment on the part of the graduates and their good relationship with supervisors and colleagues.

The other skills were problem-solving and critical thinking. As to problem-solving, the findings showed that the graduates were skillful in evaluating the validity of arguments based on the qualitative and quantitative information. Problem-solving skill involves information analysis and transformation in achieving goals (Giampaoli, Giampaoli, Ciambotti, Ciambotti, Bontis & Bontis, 2017). It is considered one of the key transferable skills (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005), and in their framework on employability, Hillage and Pollard (1998) and Osmani et al. (2015) listed it as one of the key skills. It is also one of the capability areas identified by the Australian Technology Network of Universities (Cumming, 2010) and Government Skills Australia (2006, as cited by Cumming, 2010). Citing other skills such as comprehension and math skills, it is understandable that employers observe a higher level of problem-solving skills among the CJC graduates. For critical thinking, graduates have the ability to evaluate their own thinking throughout the steps and processes used in problem-solving and decision making. This finding is another positive feedback for the school because this specific skill is a bit challenging. For instance, critical thinking was at the bottom among the skills rated as average or below

average by 768 managers and executives during the 2012 Critical Skills Survey (Desai, Berger & Higgs, 2016). As one of the higher-order-cognitive skills (Cuningham & Villaseñor, 2006), critical thinking skill involves processing complex information and making a good judgment. For the employers, they saw this skill among the graduates of CJC.

Two skills at the bottom but still received a higher rating were research and analysis and time management. Aside from communication and problem solving, employers considered analytical skills as a priority (Cuningham & Villaseñor, 2006). The ability to process information is a competency needed for any job. Research skill is not something many employees possess. In fact, even managers do not claim mastery of this skill. For example, research skill received the lowest rating among hotel and restaurant managers in America, a study reported (Breiter & Dements, 1996). However, the results of the study gave a brighter scenario referring to the graduates of CJC because research and analysis received a high rating from the employers. The last was time management. The high rating description meant that CJC graduates showed the ability in setting up priorities and allocating time efficiently to complete several tasks within specific deadlines. Naturally, but also based on literature, time management drives productivity (Abugre, 2017), another skill receiving a high rating in this present study. Moreover, research findings also reported other correlations between time management and job satisfaction (Claessens, Van Eerde, Rutte & Roe, 2007; Rao, 2018; Tavakoli, Tavakoli & Pouresmaeil, 2013) and between time management and health or stress (Claessens, et al., 2007; Grissom, Loeb & Mitani, 2015). Hence, though these two are in the bottom of the ranking, they remained very important skills as evaluated by the employers with high rating.

Conclusion

The results, showing all identified skills with the highly satisfactory rating, strongly suggest that Cor Jesu College is producing graduates who live up to the expectations from the industry. The employers, who were the respondents of the study, had firsthand experience of the performance of these employees who were graduates of Cor Jesu College. These findings indicate that the school's rigid training provided to its students is indeed paying off. As a Catholic school, Cor Jesu College forms its students according to its vision of truly transformed individuals. With Character getting the second highest mean among the 19 identified skills and with two other behavioral skills on the top five, it can be argued that the Catholic education facilitates the realization of its vision, mission and goals.

Anchored on the three pillars of excellence, community, and apostleship, Cor Jesu College graduates had manifested these pillars in the workplace. For example, Teamwork is a concrete manifestation of community. Character, as demonstrated in having a pleasant personality, is a testament to the school's success in its Catholic formation program. Other skills, which are technical and cognitive are rated by the employers as very highly satisfactory manifested excellence. Regarding apostleship, doing good in their job is their first task of doing God's mission entrusted to them.

Recommendations

The implication of this study is for the school to continue looking for ways to sustain and to improve its curriculum, programs, and services to level up in producing good performing graduates with needed skills in the industry. Moreover, the school cannot remain complacent to what it is at the moment so as not to be left behind considering the fast-changing advancement in society. The school should remain focus on its core values which are instrumental in producing graduates with good character. Though it still received a highly satisfactory rating, research and analysis and time management got the lowest mean among the 19 skills. The school should look into these and find ways to improve. One of the limitations of this study was on the number of respondents. Hence, a similar study is recommended with more respondents including those

from the industries not covered in this study. Another possible project is an in-depth study on the performance of the graduates using a qualitative method involving employers of graduates of Cor Jesu College.

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Article Homepage: <http://rpo.cjc.edu.ph/index.php/slongan/>



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TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Tudy, R., Niez, A., Orion, H., Morales, M.E., Abear, E.E., Rebato, A., Placer, J. & Leal, M. (2017). Employability and contribution of learned competencies and Catholic education in the workplace for the graduates of Cor Jesu College, *Slongan*, 3(1), 64–78.

Link of this article:

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Education, Tracer Study, Employability, Catholic Education, Descriptive Study, Cor Jesu College, Philippines

Employability of graduates is one of the measures of success for any school. This study aimed at determining the employability and the contribution of learned competencies and Catholic education in the workplace for the graduates of Cor Jesu College. It employed descriptive research design. Frequency and percentages were used in analyzing the data. Results showed that almost 86.7% of the graduates are employed. Most of them worked under an employer, had a permanent or regular status and mostly belonged to the rank and file. About 2/3 of them worked in the government sector, and the vast majority worked in the Philippines. They got their job through a recommendation of someone or by merely being a walk-in applicant. The majority also landed a job within six months after graduation. Their first job was related to the course they took up in the school. The range of their current salary was within 5,000–15,000 pesos. The top three competencies learned in school that were helpful in the workplace were communication skills, human relation skills, and information technological skills. They also considered their Catholic education as a factor that helped them in their professional life. The result affirmed the quality of Catholic education that Cor Jesu College had offered particularly in preparing students for the world of work. The implication of this study was for the school to look into the school initiated job opportunities and to explore on courses related to public administration.

Introduction

One of the most concrete and reliable indicators of the success of any higher educational institution (HEI) is the employability of its graduates. The school is expected to prepare its students for work to contribute to society. However, countries in different parts of the world are always confronted with problems of unemployment. Unfortunately, some of the unemployed individuals have college degrees. With the growing number of unemployed graduates all over the world (Abel, Deitz, & Su, 2014; SDR/Sunnex, 2014 ; Nawaguna, 2014; Sharma, 2014; Godman, Kirkham & Kraland, 2013), this is coupled with a growing concern over job mismatches (Andrews & Russell, 2012); Cavanagh, Burston, Southcombe & Bartram, 2015; CMO 32, 2010; Lesgold, Feuer & Black, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991), which contributes to the problem of unemployment. The workplace is in need of a labor force equipped with necessary skills and is responsive to the needs and requirements of the industry. Employers expect that training in school is the preparation of students for the world of work (Hesketh, 2000). However, this is not always the case as evidence by the job mismatches. Though there might be jobs

available which do not necessarily demand a college degree (McGuinness, 2013), it remains imperative that training institutions equip students with the necessary skills for future related jobs. In other words, whether from a college or high school graduate, employers are looking for skills that fit the industry needs.

In the Philippines, the same problem of unemployment is happening. According to the National Statistics Office (NSO) report, 18% of unemployed Filipinos are college graduates (Torres, 2013). In response to this growing problem, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) even released a moratorium order (CMO 32, s. 2010) for the opening of courses that are already flooded with enrollees and whose job demand is low. One of the reasons for this order is to address the problem of job mismatch. Schools are mandated by the commission to ensure the teaching of required competencies so that when their graduates are hired they perform as expected. Moreover, the government, through CHED, expects the schools to address the gap by offering programs that address the demands of the industry.

Cor Jesu College (CJC), as a higher educational institution, responded to this call from CHED by crafting a new five-year strategic plan with emphasis on the quality of graduates. Also, the school is preparing for its 60th foundation in 2019. After sixty years of existence, CJC creates mechanisms to evaluate its program, services, and curriculum. One of these mechanisms is a tracer study with the aim of determining the employability of its graduates and the help of Catholic education to their work. The purpose of this study is significant for the improvement of the programs and services of CJC. Though there are numerous tracer studies with a focus on employability, this article offers a unique addition to the contribution of Catholic education which is something unique for CJC and for other Catholic higher educational institutions to ponder.

Review of Related Literature

Tracer studies are regularly done by schools and institutions not only to trace their graduates but also to get information to the relevance and effectiveness of their programs in preparing students for work. In this review, a discussion on several concepts is given importance particularly on education and employability and employability attributes.

Education and Employability

The focus on the employability of graduates is gaining more emphasis for higher educational institutions (HEIs) as the industry expects a work-ready supply in the labor market. Knight and Yorke (2003) viewed employability “as the confluence of understanding, subject-specific and generic social practices (or skills), metacognition (reflection or strategic thinking) and cell A incremental self-theories (intelligence as a social and practical achievement, not as a God-given” (p. 7-8). Schools work on these aspects through a responsive and dynamic curriculum, qualified and competent human resource, upgraded and modern facilities, and responsive support services. In fact, HEIs are mandated by governments to provide quality education which translates to producing the best trained workforce (Andrews & Russell, 2012; Belwal, Priyadarshi & Al Fazari, 2017; Bridgstock, 2009; Yoong, Don & Foroutan, 2017). For example, in the United Kingdom, aside from government’s monitoring on the performance of employees, the government also tasked higher education institutions to ensure the employability of their graduates (Knight & Yorke, 2003). In Malaysia, the government puts the needs of the industry as a top priority for schools to tailor their training. In support, the Malaysian government invested on creating the Graduate Employability Taskforce which produced *The National Graduate Employability Blueprint 2012–2017* (Yoong, Don & Foroutan, 2017). In response to

the challenges and demands of the industry, schools are focusing intently on graduate attributes with employability skills to make their graduates competitive (Nilsson, 2010; Baker, 2009; Nair, Patil & Mertova, 2009; Bennett, Dunne & Carre', 2000).

In a review of 187 published articles on employability from 2012–2016, Artess, Mellors-Bourne & Hooley (2017) found that higher educational institutions had responded to the challenges of their graduates' employability by creating frameworks and implementing different strategies. Some of these were:

“changing the structures seeks to reorganise the institution to make it more effective in delivering employability. This might include changes to staffing, resourcing, curriculum and institutional mission;

changing the programme mix focuses on the development of the range of programmes and qualifications offered. For example, this may include the development of programmes that have a strong vocational focus, placement years and an increase in employer involvement; **curriculum development** explores how changes to the current curriculum such as the introduction of employability modules or employability elements can support graduate employability;

extra-curricular provision focuses on what institutions can do outside of the core curriculum through the provision of career and employability services and other provision designed to enhance the student experience while co-curricular provision emphasizes provision which complements or extends the curriculum;

networking explores the way in which institutions can involve external stakeholders in the development of student employability” (Artess, Mellors-Bourne & Hooley, 2017, p. 8).

Most of the curricular and co-curricular offerings in higher education include different programs and activities wherein a student is immersed in the real world situation. Additionally, Knight and Yorke (2003) identified four ways to enhance students' employability. These were work experience, entrepreneurship modules, careers advice, and portfolios, profiles, and records of achievement. These were all embedded in the whole formation of a student in preparation for their future employment. Moreover, among the soft skills commonly mentioned as significant for employment, the character seems to be given more weight by employers. For example, in a survey among 100 companies in India, the employers rated integrity and values as number one compared to other six skills—results orientation, core domain knowledge, better aptitude, cultural fitment, teamwork and customer orientation, and English communication skills (Ghosh, 2017). Hence, education or training prepares students or trainees towards expected jobs related to the competencies they learned.

Employability Attributes

While different studies reported similar or different results, there were, however, most common attributes for employability. Some of these were *communication skills* (McArthur, Kubacki, Pang & Alcaraz, 2017; Moore & Moton, 2017; Oluwatobi, Ayedun, Ajibola, Iroham & Akinjare, 2017; Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017; Tsitskari, Goudas, Tsalouchou, & Michalopoulou, 2017); *problem solving skills* (Sarkar, Overton, Thompson & Rayner, 2016; Tsitskari, Goudas, Tsalouchou, & Michalopoulou, 2017); *time management* (McArthur, Kubacki, Pang & Alcaraz, 2017); *teamwork* (Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017; Tan, 2016); and *problem solving skills* (Fallows & Steven, 2000; Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017; Sarkar, Overton, Thompson & Rayner, 2016). Interestingly, few studies identified particular attributes or skills as contributory factors to employability like *sports engagement* (Griffiths, Bullough, Shibli & Wilson, 2017), *individual academic work* such as the writing of a literature review (Andersen & Lees, 2017), and *Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills* (Garrido, Sullivan & Gordon, 2010; Green, 2017; Picatoste, Pérez-Ortiz & Ruesga-Benito, 2017). However, the aforementioned skills were the most generic and scholars argued that these were not enough noting the fast-changing

work environment and the upgrading of industry needs.

Because the concept of employability has become more complex, researchers provided new ways of looking at it. Some literature highlighted either the human capital theory or the labor demand theory, but most studies considered both. For example, a study in Australia revealed that abilities to “communicate, analyze and solve problems, work as a team member, tackle unfamiliar problems, and plan one’s work are skills most needed in the labor market” (GCCA, 1999 in Levin & Tempone, 2002: p. 253). In Portugal, using official data on education, skills and tenure for 1991, 1994 and 1997 and in training for 1990, 1991, 1996 and 1997, it was found out that high skills, high levels of education and high levels of tenure were predictors of employability (Tomé, 2007). Some employers would even prefer applicants coming from a distinct school (Singh & Singh, 2008) and possessed preferred skills (Shannon, 2012).

There were also efforts to bring together the many aspects on employability to respond to the clamor from the industry. McArthur, Kubacki, Pang and Alcaraz (2017) reviewed literatures on graduate employability and categorized these studies into four areas: definitional literature that reflects the newness of this field of study, defining such terms as soft skills, competencies, and work-ready; a smaller body of work on curriculum development to address employers’ needs; factor analyses of employability skills; and gap analyses of the discrepancies between teaching and practice. Though this model was more encompassing, it was worth noting that it gave clearer definition on what soft skills were. Moreover, emphasis on the soft skills is gaining the interests among employers (Cunningham & Villaseñor, 2016; Mishra, 2014; Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017). For example, Thakar and Mehta (2017) suggested the inclusion of what they called as secondary attributes such as personal, social, psychological and other environmental variables. Bringing together the different literature on employability was not easy because different situations called for different understanding.

As an educational institution, Cor Jesu College continues to find means to improve its programs and services. It is also very much interested if its graduates are employed and are performing well, influenced by the training and formation they had while still in school. Hence, this tracer study was done to give the school reliable information about its graduates in the workplace.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to determine the employability and the contribution of learned competencies and Catholic education in the workplace for the graduates of Cor Jesu College. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions (1.) What is the profile of the alumni in terms of employment status, location, designation/position, category of company, finding their first job, the length of time in landing their first job, job’s relation to course taken, and salary range?; (2.) What competencies learned in college that are helpful in the workplace; and (3.) Did their Catholic education in CJC help them in their work?

Method

This study employed a descriptive research design. The respondents of the study were the college alumni of Cor Jesu College who graduated from the school year 2008–2009 to 2012–2013. The survey was done in two ways—distribution of questionnaires and an online survey. Due to the limitation of achieving the sample size, quota sampling was employed with the target number of 300. Due to the difficulty of getting responses, a major challenge in any tracer study, the data analysis commenced when the 93% (279) response rate was achieved based on the quota. The survey questionnaire was adapted from the previous tracer study tool of the school. It went through validation of content by the deans and program heads of the school. The respondents were asked to reflect their names on the questionnaire for proper documentation and to avoid duplication in the two forms of surveys. However, confidentiality was observed by

not divulging their names and keeping the questionnaires in a secured place. Permission was sought before the respondents were asked to answer the survey. The data were analyzed using frequency and percentages.

Results

Two-hundred seventy-nine (279) alumni were able to answer the survey questionnaires. However, not all of them answered all the questions. Hence, a total number of the population in each table was not consistent with the total population. The results are presented here into three clusters—employment profile, competencies learned in college, and contribution of Catholic education to alumni's work.

Employment Profile

Majority of the alumni of Cor Jesu College were employed which accounted for 86.74% as compared to not employed with only 13.26%. For those who were employed, 64.76% were regular or with permanent status followed by contractual (27.31%), temporary (3.96%) and casual (3.96%). 89.25% were working under an employer (89.2%) while only 4.96% were self-employed. However, there were those who were also employed by an employer and at the same time having another job of their own (5.79%). Almost all of the respondents worked within the country (95.55%) while 4.45% worked abroad.

Concerning designation or position, 77.63% were in the staff or rank and file. It was followed by those with supervisory positions with 11.84%, middle managerial rank with 7.46%, Self-employed 2.19% and Top Managerial with 0.88%. Also, the majority of the respondents worked in the government sector (67.11%) while the rest were in the private sector (32.89%).

As to how they got a job, 33.46% of the respondents said they were recommended by someone, 21.93% as a walk-in applicant, and 20.07% got the information from friends. Other reasons were job fair conducted by the school (8.55%), response to an advertisement (6.32%), others (4.46%), job fair outside the school (2.97%), family business (1.86%) and School Bulletin Board (0.37%). Regarding the length of time they found a job, half of the respondents (50.00%) got a job in less than a month. It was followed by those who landed a job in just one to six months (34.44%). Others got the job in seven to eleven months (7.04%), one year to less than three years (5.93%), three years and above (1.85%) and two years to less than three years (0.74%).

Table 1. Employment status of the alumni of Cor Jesu College.

Being Employed or not	N	Percent
Employed	242	86.74
Not Employed	37	13.26
Total	279	100.0
Status of Those Employed	N	Percent
Regular or Permanent	147	64.76
Temporary	9	3.96
Contractual	62	27.31
Casual	9	3.96
Total	227	100.00
Type of Employment	N	Percent
Working under an employer	216	89.25
Self-employed	12	4.96
Both of the above	14	5.79
Total	242	100

Table 2. Place of employment of the alumni of Cor Jesu College.

Place of Employment	N	Percent
within the Philippines	236	95.55
Abroad/Overseas	11	4.455
Total	247	100.00

Table 3. Designation/position and the type of company where the alumni of Cor Jesu College work.

Designation/Position	N	Percent
Top Managerial	2	0.88
Middle Managerial	17	7.46
Supervisor	27	11.84
Staff or Rank and File	177	77.63
Self-employed	5	2.19
Total	228	100.00
Category of Company	N	Percent
Government	153	67.11
Private	75	32.89
Total	228	100.00

Table 4. How the alumni find their first job and the length of time of landing this job

On Finding Their First Job	N	Percent
Response to an advertisement	17	6.32
As walk-in applicant	59	21.93
Recommended by someone	90	33.46
Information from friends	54	20.07
School bulletin board	1	0.37
Family Business	5	1.86
Job Fair outside the school	8	2.97
Job Fair conducted by CJC	23	8.55
Others	12	4.46
Total	269	100.00
Length of Time in Landing Their First Job	N	Percent
Less than a month	135	50.00
1 to 6 months	93	34.44
7 to 11 months	19	7.04
1 year to less than 3 years	16	5.93
2 years to less than 3 years	2	0.74
3 years and above	5	1.85
Total	270	100.00

Table 5. Relationship of first job to course taken up in Cor Jesu College and the length of time of staying on this job

First Job in Relation to a Course Taken up in CJC	N	Percent
Yes	206	76.01
No	65	23.99
Total	271	100.00
Length of Stay on Their First Job		
less than a month	14	5.19
1 to 6 months	75	27.78
7 to 11 months	53	19.63
1 year to less than 2 years	77	28.52
2 years to less than 3 years	20	7.41
3 years and above	31	11.48
Total	270	100.00

After graduation from Cor Jesu College, those who got a job related to the course they took up in school accounted for 76.01% while 23.99% of the respondents said their first job had no relation to their course. As to the length of stay on their first job, the majority stayed within one year to less than two years (28.52%) and one to six months (27.78%). Some stayed for only seven to eleven months (19.63%), three years and above (11.48%), two years and less than three years (7.41%) and less than a month (5.19%).

When it comes to salary as shown in Table 6, 48.52% are paid between 5,000–9,999 pesos, 22.96% receive between 10,000 to 14,999 (22.96%), 11.85% with 15,000–19,999, 6.67% with 30,000 and above, 7.04% with 20,000–24,999 and 2.96% with 25,000–29,999.

Table 6. The range of current salary of the alumni of Cor Jesu College

Current Salary	N	Percent
5,000 to 9,999	131	48.52
10,000 to 14,999	62	22.96
15,000 to 19,999	32	11.85
20,000 to 24,999	19	7.04
25,000 to 29,999	8	2.96
30,000 and above	18	6.67
Total	270	100

Competencies learned in college that are helpful in the workplace

One of the major questions asked was on the learned competencies that were helpful in the workplace. Though there were six identified skills, the respondents chose as many as they can in what they believed were as useful to them. Almost tied for the top spot were communication skills (22%) and human relation skills (21%). Next in rank was information technology skills (16%), critical thinking skills (15%) and last was entrepreneurial skills (10%).

Table 7: Competencies learned in school that are helpful in the workplace.

Competencies	Total Responses	Percentage	Rank
Communication Skills	204	22%	1
Human Relation Skills	196	21%	2
Entrepreneurial Skills	95	10%	6
Information Technology Skills	155	16%	3
Problem-Solving Skills	148	16%	4
Critical Thinking Skills	144	15%	5
TOTAL	942	100%	

Contribution of Catholic Education to the Alumni's Work

The respondents were asked if the Catholic education they got from Cor Jesu College helped them in their work. The answer was a resounding yes with 95.22% of them gave their affirmative response.

Table 8. The Contribution of Catholic education in CJC to the alumni's work

	N	Percent
Yes	259	95.22
No	13	4.78
Total	272	100.00

Discussion

With almost 90% of the respondents already employed and more than half of them with a regular or permanent status, the result was good news for the school that has labored much on the formation of its students to become not only ready but also sought after by employers. Although unemployment among college graduates was prevalent in many parts of the world (Abel, Deitz, & Su, 2014; SDR/Sunnex, 2014; Nawaguna, 2014; Sharma, 2014; Godman, Kirkham & Kraland, 2013), graduates of Cor Jesu College found jobs quickly. While most of them were working under an employer, few were self-employed, and some both employed and self-employed, meaning they also had other money-earning jobs. This finding can be attributed to the integration of entrepreneurial skills in the curriculum or other co-curricular programs as schools find these skills very relevant for future engagements regardless what courses students take (Duval-Couetil, Shartrand & Reed, 2016; Gul & Mehmood, 2016; Jiang, Xue-Mei, 2017; Zhao & Gearin, 2016). Finding extra income aside from regular jobs is a direction many people are seriously considering nowadays. With entrepreneurial skills learned in school, although last in rank in Table 7 for the respondents of this study, graduates can easily venture into business, thus, earning extra income.

Worth noting also was a place of employment wherein majority of the respondents are working within the country. Although the lure of working abroad is very enticing for many (Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2005; Yang, 2003; United Nations, 2002. Laguatan, 2011), the respondents preferred to stay or found jobs domestically. This finding is consistent with the data on graduates immediately finding a job after graduation which also means that they find a job within the country. Understandably, most of the respondents would be in the rank and file formation given the fact that they were young and just new to the job, although a good number managed to be at the supervisory and even top managerial positions. One interesting result was the kind

of company where the respondents worked. Most of them were in the public sector. This finding supported the report from the Civil Service Commission (CSC) about the increasing number of workers in the government sector (CSC, 2014). Aside from the availability of jobs, there was also a sense of security when one is employed by the government. This is similar to how Americans perceive having a job in the government (Frank & Lewis, 2004; Gao, Kong, & Kong, 2017; Lewis & Frank, 2002). It was surprising in the sense that CJC did not even offer Bachelor in Public Administration. Judging from this finding, the school might consider offering courses related to public service like Bachelor in Public Administration.

On the part of the school, there was more to be done in terms of providing alumni with needed information about job opportunities. Job fairs conducted in the school and the posting in the bulletin board did not show much fruit based on the results of the study. The respondents relied more on the recommendation of someone or their efforts of applying for a vacant position. On the one hand, this is something worth reflecting, particularly on school's job awareness and the whole job placement program. On the other hand, it can be argued that the alumni easily found jobs because they were suited for the available ones, coupled with people they knew who were willing to help. Moreover, the advent of social media can also be attributed on finding a job (Mowbray, Hall, Raeside & Robertson, 2017; Priyadarshini, Kumar & Jha, 2017), or through the recommendation by someone who could possibly be informed through social media interaction. Also, what was more amazing was that almost half of them landed a job less than one month after graduation. In other words, these alumni were qualified and easily took the job. It also made sense if there was already a job waiting for them even before graduation, which was a typical scenario particularly to education graduating students. For instance, principals sent letters to CJC about job vacancies as early as December or January. In addition, with the majority of them (76%) landing a job in relation to the course they took, it showed the relevance and responsiveness of the courses offered by the school. As against the reported job mismatches, CJC produced graduates who landed a job related to their course. However, the limitation of this claim was on having a job and not necessarily how they performed as evaluated by the employers.

As to the competencies learned in school which are beneficial to the respondents' experience in the workplace, communication skills top the list. It showed that the school capacitated them with this particular skill, which is one of the common attributes of what employers look for (McArthur, Kubacki, Pang & Alcaraz, 2017; Moore & Moton, 2017; Oluwatobi, Ayedun, Ajibola, Iroham & Akinjare, 2017; Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017; Tsitskari, Goudas, Tsalouchou, & Michalopoulou, 2017). Almost tied for communication skills is human relation skills. Building good relationship among colleagues and supervisors are one of the soft skills employers want for their employees (Chang, Jia & Cai, 2013; Jang & Kandampully, 2013; Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017). Building good relationship with co-workers and supervisors is a mark of a true Cor Jesu specifically manifesting one of the pillars of the school—community.

Moreover, the respondents affirmed the great help of Catholic education in their work. It means that the formation they got from Cor Jesu College is relevant to their professional life. Though in this study, the question was generic about the help of Catholic education in their work, it can be argued that the values learned in school were carried out after graduation (Calpo & Bullecer, 2017). These values learned in school, facilitated through the holistic program of Catholic education, contribute to the development of soft skills, which are emphasized in the workplace (Cunningham & Villaseñor, 2016; Mishra, 2014; Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017; Thakar and Mehta, 2017).

The study was limited only to the profiling of the alumni, competencies learned and the simple question with the help of Catholic education to work experience. The question of agreeability only touched the superficial level. A follow-up study in this aspect is recommended to understand further how the formation in school has an impact on the graduates' life at the workplace. Also, the number of targeted respondents was not achieved.

Conclusion

The result of the study affirmed the quality of education Cor Jesu College has offered to its graduates. The number of those who are employed and self-employed is a testament to the school's training that prepares graduates to the world of work. However, providing job opportunities through school initiated program and activities must be strengthened since most of the respondents got the information from outside sources. Nevertheless, the training or formation program that the school has offered can be argued as relevant and responsive to the industry since most of the respondents landed a job in less than six months. Moreover, most common attributes employers were looking, such as communication, human relation, and information technology skills, were also learned in school which were helpful in the experience of the alumni in the workplace. As to the job placement, it can be argued that the government sector is one of the biggest markets for Cor Jesu College graduates. The school, therefore, will have to take this information seriously so that students will be prepared and well-equipped if they will someday be working in the government. Hence, one implication of this study is for the school to consider offering programs much needed in the government sector like public administration course. Moreover, the school will have to evaluate its program and see how its graduate can maximize the massive demand for labor in the private sector.

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Reading Speed and Texts Comprehension among Senior High School

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TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Mbewa, W. (2017). Reading Speed and Texts Comprehension among Senior High School, *Slongan*, 3(1), 79–90.

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Reading Speed and Texts Comprehension among Senior High School

Waldetrudis Mbewa

A B S T R A C T

Keywords:

reading speed, reading comprehension, correlation, correlation, Indonesia

Reading is a necessary skill any student should master before moving forward to learn other competencies in English learning. However, reading skill is not just about the ability to articulate the words. It is also understanding the meaning. This research investigates the correlation between Reading Speed and Reading Comprehension Text of the 12th Grade Students of two Senior High Schools in Nagekeo Regency, namely SMAK Baleriwu Danga (private school) and SMAN 1 Aesesa (public school). It employs a quantitative correlational research design. The respondents were all the third grade students of Language Program as a sample with the total number of 51, 21 from SMAK and 30 for SMAN 1 students. Results showed a strong correlation between reading speed and reading comprehension for SMAK Baleriwu Danga (.877) and SMAN 1 Aesesa (.926). Both schools, therefore, revealed a strong correlation between reading speed and reading comprehension. The implication of study is for teachers, as the main simulators in the teaching learning process, to continue giving more opportunities for students to practice reading to increase reading speed and reading comprehension.

Introduction

Reading is a way to search information which is needed by a reader. Related to this definition, he/she must need some skills for obtaining information. Those skills are skimming and scanning. Besides, a good reader must have a technique that can be used while reading namely speed reading technique. Speed reading technique is a technique used by the reader to get the information faster with better comprehension within limited time. In this definition, there are three important things namely faster information, better comprehension and limited time. It means that all of three parts will go together in speed reading technique. Beside speed, some also must comprehend the text. So, reading comprehension is the ability to read the text and understand it.

As years go by and as texts become even more complex and demanding, comprehension difficulties become increasingly apparent and increasingly detrimental to effective school learning (Cornoldi and Oakhill, 2013). The terms comprehension difficulties as well as increasingly apparent and detrimental are but clear indicators of worsening threats in the field of education in general and learning in particular. Texts comprehension difficulty is truly a challenge to the education stakeholders namely, school administrators, teachers and students per se, and even the parents. In order to address the “text comprehension sickness”, it is but urgent to diagnose its possible causes. Among possible determinants of text comprehension is reading speed. Based on classroom observation done by the researcher, the English teachers said that the students’ reading speed and students’ comprehension text of those schools are still low. The students had difficulties in understanding the text because of their lack of vocabulary. Besides, they are not interested in reading. Therefore, this study is focused on investigating the relationship between students’ reading speed and reading comprehension.

Review of Related Literature

Definition of Reading

Reading is decoding and understanding written texts (Cline, Johnstone, & King, 2006). Decoding requires translating the symbols of written system into the spoken words which they represent. Understanding is determined by the purposes for reading, the context, the nature of the text, and the readers' strategies and knowledge. Meanwhile, Richard *et al.*, (2002) explain that reading means perceiving a written text in order to understand its contents which can be done silently. They also add that reading is a particular way in which the readers understand texts, passages, paragraphs, even books and an ability to understand and find out the information presented in the form of written text. Furthermore, Murniasih (2012) states that reading is the activity of understanding the printed matters where the purpose of reading is to understand what the writer tries to express through printed matters. In addition, Grabe and Stoller (2013) state that reading is the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately. Moreover, Pang *et al.*, (2003:6) state that reading is an understanding of written texts. In understanding written texts, a good reader engages the eyes, ears, mouth, and, of course, the brain to comprehend the meaning of the books. Reading and comprehension are related to each other. The higher reading skills someone has, the easier he/she will understand the texts.

Looking from those definitions, it is clearly stated that reading is a means of communicating information between the writer and the reader. The writer puts his or her ideas or gives information in the written form, and the reader tries to understand the ideas, messages or information that are intended by the writer in the written text.

The Purpose of Reading

The main purpose of reading is to get the idea or information from the written text. The purposes of reading are different among readers as they have different needs of reading a text. Sutz and Weverka (2006:12) say that the purpose of reading is to comprehend what has been read, to learn something new, to see the world from a different perspective, or maybe just get information to pass an exam or prepare for a business meeting. Furthermore, Tarigan (2008) classifies seven purposes on reading namely: 1) Reading for details and fact which is reading to know what is done by the subject of the story. 2) Reading for main ideas refers to reading to know what the text is about. 3) Reading for sequences of organization which means that reading to know each part of the story. 4) Reading for inference means reading to know what the researcher means by his/her story. 5) Reading for classifying is reading to find unusual things. 6) Reading for evaluating is reading to know the value of the story. 7) Reading for comparing is reading to compare the way of the story with the life of reader. Moreover, Fachrurazy (2012) classifies the purpose of reading activities into three parts. They are: 1) Reading for comprehension which means the readers need to comprehend the text quickly. 2) Reading for enjoyment which means the readers read the text just for pleasure without the time pressure. 3) Reading to find the accurate pronunciation which means reading fluently with the correct pronunciation of vocabularies.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher can conclude that the relationship between the purpose of reading and reading comprehension is very significant. The readers who have the same purpose can achieve the goal in their different achievement. The purpose of reading is very important because it will influence the process of reading and reading comprehension.

McDonald (2012) stated that there are four main types of reading techniques namely: 1) Skimming is the process of reading to get the main idea of text and is sometimes referred to as gist reading. 2) Scanning is reading technique used to find specific information quickly or it

involves getting reader's eyes to quickly scuttle across sentence and is used to get just a simple piece of information. 3) Extensive reading involves reading longer text usually for someone's pleasure. 4) Intensive reading is reading short text to extract specific information or approaching the text under the close guidance of the reader; this is more on accuracy activity involving reading for detail. Related to the types of reading techniques above, the researcher concludes that the readers will do reading speed accurately and reading comprehension correctly by knowing those types of reading techniques. Those types of reading are very important for the readers in mastering reading skills.

The Importance of Speed Reading

Speed reading technique is very important for the readers to grasp the meaning of the text within limited time. Buzan (2004) states that there are some advantages of speed reading technique such as to improve reading speed, to improve and maintain comprehension, to increase understanding of the function of eyes and brain and to save the time. Thus, speed reading is a good technique that has many advantages while reading process. In reading process, a speed reader needs eyes fixation more quickly than the slow readers do to see the text and also needs brain to absorb the information quickly. They must work together and it cannot be separated. Sutz & Weverka (2006:12–13) define the important of speed reading actually increases reading comprehension because the readers read several words at a time in speed reading. The readers also could pick up the meaning of words in context.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher concludes that reading speed is not only reading in a limited time, but the main purpose of reading speed itself is to comprehend reading materials better by pushing the capability of a reader's brain to maximum. While someone speeds their reading, they will also push their brain to think harder than when they slow down their reading. To maximize the readers' brain, they also push their brain to think hard and logically in comprehend reading text.

Assessing Reading Speed

Reading speed can be assessed by the time and words read per minutes. According to Sutz & Weverka (2006:77–82), the readers can find out reading speed by some ways: 1) Using a clock, watch, or stopwatch, while he/she is reading the texts. Meanwhile, Noer (2012) states that people use a stopwatch to calculate reading speed. Besides, Daiek and Anter (2002) add that the lecturer should set students' words acquisition per minute.

Due to this research, the researcher would like to assess students' reading speed by some indicators such as reading time and words read per minute (WPM). Reading time will be assessed when students read the passage or text, and words read per minute will be assessed by formula: words read divided by students reading time in minutes or (Words read ÷ reading time in minutes = WPM). It is stated by Sutz & Weverka (2006).

Beside speed, according to Blachowich *et al.* (2008), assessment reading comprehension focuses on what is important in reading. They also state that teachers have to assess comprehension for many different purposes. Those different purposes are a general understanding of text, developing an interpretation of text, and examining content and structure of text. Meanwhile, Djiwandono (2008:116) states that there are three abilities to comprehend reading text. These three abilities are basic abilities, intermediate abilities and advance abilities. 1) In basic abilities, the students understand the real context of words, know the organization of text, know the main ideas in the text, and able to answer the question on implicitly/explicitly stated information. 2) In intermediate abilities, the students are able to answer the questions by different words, and inference the content of text. 3) In advance abilities, the students know the expression of words, and understand a written text as the writer's mean.

Based on the three abilities stated by Djiwandono (2008), in this research the researcher focused only on basics and intermediates abilities. The reason was those abilities are suitable to the materials in senior high school curriculum.

Relationship of Reading Speed and Text Comprehension

Reading speed and reading comprehension are related to each other. The relation is when someone reads a text, he or she memorizes the content of the text or what we called is understanding. He understands the text in his mind. The process of memorizing a situation model is called the “comprehension process”. Kintsch and van Dijk (1983) assume that readers of a text build three different mental representations of the text: a verbatim representation of the text, a semantic representation that describes the meaning of the text and a situational representation of the situation to which the text refers. The propositional representation consists initially of a list of propositions that are derived from the text. After having read a complete sentence, this list of propositions is transformed into a network of propositions. If the text is coherent, all nodes of the network are connected to each other. Text comprehension can be improved by instruction that helps readers use specific comprehension strategies.

Dealing with reading comprehension, reading cannot be separated from comprehension because the purpose or the result of reading activity is to comprehend what has been read. Reading without understanding what has been read is useless. In other words, reading comprehension is called as a reading comprehension only if the readers are able to comprehend the meaning of the text. Furthermore, Chair (2001) states that reading comprehension is defined as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written text. Pang E.S *et al.*, (2003) also state that comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text. Readers typically make use of background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, experience with text and other strategies to help them understand written text. According to Blachowicz *et al.*, (2008), comprehension is skillful and strategic. This means that to understand the reading text, a good reader must have skill and strategy to do that.

Moreover, Landi (2009:701) states that reading comprehension is a complex process that requires the coordination of bottom up word level skills and top down meaning processing skills. Since it is a complex activity, the researcher thinks that readers or students should have the strategy to comprehend the reading text easily. This reason is very crucial especially for those who want to continue their study into the higher level. In terms of academic purposes, the researcher has an idea that reading comprehension is a very important skill for the learners in order to be successful in any educational level. The prerequisites of reading comprehension skill will increase as students attain higher grades in which they should be able to comprehend more complex material.

From the ideas above, the researcher concludes that reading comprehension is the power to get an idea or meaning from a written text, understand the text according to prior knowledge, and interpret the reading text in accordance with the readers’ needs and purpose.

Objectives of the Study

The aims of the study are:

1. To find out reading speed and reading comprehension of the 12th grade students of Senior High Schools in Nagekeo Regency in Academic Year 2016–2017.
2. To determine the correlation between reading speed and reading comprehension of the 12th grade students of Senior High Schools in Nagekeo Regency in Academic Year 2016–2017.

Method

The method used in this research is quantitative research method. The research is conducted to the the third grade students of Language Program of two senior high schools namely SMAK Baleriwu Danga and SMAN I Aesesa with the total number is 51 students. The first school consisted of 21 students—15 girls and 6 boys, and the second school consisted of 30 students—22 girls and 8 boys. This research started on January 2nd to 9th for SMAK Baleriwu Danga and January 18th until 26th 2017 for SMAN 1 Aesesa. The data collection technique used in this research were Test of Reading Speed and Test of Reading Comprehension. Reading speed test was used to know students' reading time, and students' words read per minute. Meanwhile, reading comprehension test was used to know student's comprehension of the text. In speed reading test, the researcher used two topics which were taken from Look Ahead an English Course for Senior High School Students Year XII by Sudarwati *et al.*, (2007:68). The first topic was "The Sign of Four" which was the main test. This topic consisted of 487 words. Meanwhile, the other topic is "The Black Cat" that used only as introductory explanation or an exercise about how the students do the main test. The test was an essay test form. In reading comprehension test, the researcher provided ten questions. The questions of reading comprehension test were taken from speed reading text.

This study used some steps. For speed reading test, the researcher informed the students that they read one text aloud and the number of words read will be counted. The students came in front of the class one by one and read the text. When the student read the text, the researcher recorded their reading speed by using a stopwatch. The researcher pointed to the first word of the passage, asked the student to begin, and started using the stopwatch. The researcher stopped the stopwatch when the student finished read the last word of the passage. While in reading comprehension test, the students did the test after completing speed reading. The students answered the questions without revisiting the text.

In analyzing the data, the researcher provided score of students' reading speed and students' reading comprehension. The researcher calculated the correlation coefficient between X variable (reading speed) and Y variable (reading comprehension) by using Person Product Moment for each school. Those processes of analyzing data were based on the formula below.

1. Students' Words Per Minute (WPM)

Words Per Minutes = Words Read ÷ Reading Time in Minutes *or*

$$\frac{\text{Number of Words in Passage}}{\text{Reading Time (in seconds)}} \times 60 = \text{Words Per Minute}$$

Sutz & Weverka (2006:76).

2. Students' Reading Comprehension

According to Dhanga (2014:18), the students' reading comprehension test scores will be analyzed using scoring rubrics with the range is 0-1. The highest score for each question is 1 and the lowest score is 0. The maximum score here was 10 since there are 10 questions. Then, the students' comprehension score was calculated using the following formula: total obtained score divided by maximum score times one hundred.

$$\text{Students' Reading Comprehension Score} = \frac{\text{Total Obtained Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}}$$

After that, the researcher calculated students' reading comprehension by using the formula: Words read per minutes (WPM) rate × comprehension percentage score (as decimal).

Sutz & Weverka (2006).

3. The correlation between X variable and Y variable was assessed by the formula below:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n \sum x_i y_i - (\sum x_i)(\sum y_i)}{\sqrt{\{n \sum x_i^2 - (\sum x_i)^2\}} \sqrt{\{n \sum y_i^2 - (\sum y_i)^2\}}}$$

Where: rx_y = Correlation product moment
n = Number of students
 $\sum x$ = Sum of X score
 $\sum y$ = Sum of Y score
 $\sum xy$ = Sum of product of X and Y scores for each student
Arikunto (2010:338).

In order to interpret the relationship among study variables, the process was guided by the following categorization as suggested by Asaad (2008):

Computed r	Descriptive Interpretation
+/- 1.00	Perfect correlation
Between +/- 0.75—+/- 0.99	High correlation
Between +/- 0.51—+/- 0.74	Moderately high correlation
Between +/- 0.31—+/- 0.50	Moderately low correlation
Between +/- 0.01—+/- 0.30	Low correlation
0.00	No correlation

Results and Discussion

Students' scores were taken by means of oral test and written test. Oral test was used to get students' reading speed score while students' reading comprehension score are obtained through written test. There are ten essay questions for reading comprehension that cover stated and implied information.

To be more accurate, the researcher used Statistical Analysis System (SAS) program for analyzing data. Firstly, the researcher provided the calculation of students' reading speed and students' reading comprehension for both schools—SMAK and SMAN 1 Aesesa

Table 1. Scores of Reading Speed and Reading Comprehension

SMAK			SMAN 1 Aesesa		
No	Reading Speed	Reading comprehension	No	Reading Speed	Reading Comprehension
	X	Y		X	Y
1	146	117	1	159	127
2	117	70	2	216	205
3	140	84	3	137	89
4	141	92	4	200	170
5	159	127	5	116	41
6	138	90	6	161	129
7	148	89	7	141	127
8	150	128	8	171	128
9	149	112	9	121	79
10	154	116	10	120	54
11	201	181	11	189	170
12	150	98	12	223	212

13	156	78	13	191	153
14	144	130	14	206	196
15	150	90	15	198	188
16	159	143	16	158	95
17	108	43	17	227	170
18	113	34	18	151	121
19	160	128	19	158	134
20	147	118	20	151	45
21	154	116	21	161	137
Avrg	147	104	22	231	231
			23	201	181
			24	154	139
			25	122	55
			26	122	49
			27	244	244
			28	121	97
			29	239	203
			30	211	158
			Avrg	173	138

For SMAK, result showed student number 11 as the fastest reader. She just spent 2 minutes 42 seconds to read the text of 487 words. She got the score 201 for reading speed. She also got the highest score (181) for reading comprehension. It showed that the higher the reading speed the better the reading comprehension is. Meanwhile, the student with the lowest was number 17. He spent 4 minutes and 50 seconds to read 487 words. He only got 108 of reading speed while reading comprehension was 43. It revealed the lower the reading speed the lower the reading comprehension is. The findings also showed that the average reading speed of SMAK was 147 which means that the speed was lower than normal reading speed. The same case happened on reading comprehension. The average score was 104 or 70% of the ideal score of reading comprehension.

For SMAN 1 Aesesa, the student number 27 read the text more quickly than the other students. He was able to read 487 words in just 2 minutes. His score was 244 for both reading speed and reading comprehension. Meanwhile, student number 5 of SMAN 1 Aesesa read the text slowly and he only got a score of 116 for reading speed and 41 for reading comprehension. He spent 4 minutes and 20 seconds for reading 487 words. Just like the two students mentioned in SMAK, it can be argued that in the data for SMAN 1 Aesesa suggested a student with faster reading speed also has a higher reading comprehension.

To find out the level of correlation between the reading speed and reading comprehension, the following calculation is made by means of SAS application. The result of both variables (variable X and Y) cover the amount of students, the total score, the average, the highest, the lowest, the standard deviation score of both variables. This program also provides Coefficient of Pearson Product Moment correlation for school A and school B as can be seen as follows:

Table 2. Correlation of Reading Speed and Reading Comprehension of school SMAK

Obs	Y	X
1	117	146
2	70	117
3	84	140
4	92	141
5	127	159
6	90	138
7	89	148
8	128	150
9	112	149
10	116	154
11	181	201
12	98	150
13	78	156
14	130	144
15	90	150
16	143	159
17	43	108
18	34	113
19	128	160
20	118	147
21	116	154

The CORR Procedure					
1 With Variables: x					
1 Variables: y					
Simple Statistics					
Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Sum	Minimum Maximum
x	21	146.85714	19.15277	3084	108.00000 201.00000
y	21	104.00000	33.29715	2184	34.00000 181.00000
Pearson Correlation Coefficients, N = 21					
Prob > r under H0: Rho=0					
y					
x 0.87709					
<.0001					

The previous table shows that the total score of students' reading speed is 3084, while the highest score is 201, the lowest score is 108 and the average score is 147. Meanwhile, the total score of students' reading comprehension is 2180, the highest score is 181, the lowest score is 34 and the average score is 104.

The above table shows correlation coefficient obtained is .877. If that correlation coefficient .877 (*r count* .877) is referred to the *r table*, it gave a significant level of 1% and an equivalent of .548. The *r* value was bigger than *r-table* value (.877 > .548). It means that there is strong correlation between the two variables, with the significance level of 1%. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (*H_a*) is accepted and the null hypothesis (*H₀*) is rejected. It means that students' reading speed has something to do with reading comprehension.

Table 4. Correlation of reading speed and reading comprehension of SMAN 1 Aesesa

Obs	y	x
1	127	159
2	205	216
3	89	137
4	170	200
5	41	116
6	129	161
7	127	141
8	128	171
9	79	121
10	54	120
11	170	189
12	212	223
13	153	191
14	196	206
15	188	198
16	95	158
17	170	227
18	121	151
19	134	158
20	45	151
21	137	161
22	231	231
23	181	201
24	139	154
25	55	122
26	49	122
27	244	244
28	97	121
29	203	239
30	158	211

The CORR Procedure				
1 With Variables: x				
1 Variables: y				
Simple Statistics				
Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Sum
x	30	173.33333	40.05542	5200
y	30	137.56667	57.39920	4127
Pearson Correlation Coefficients, N = 30				
Prob > r under H0: Rho=0				
y				
x 0.92637				
<.0001				

Based on the calculation above, it can be seen that total score of students' reading speed is 5200, while the highest score is 244, the lowest score is 116 and the average is 173. Meanwhile, the total score of students' reading comprehension is 4127, while the highest score is 244, the lowest score is 41 and the average is 138. Correlation coefficient obtained in SMAN 1 Aesesa is 0.926 which means there is strong correlation between the two variables, with the significance level of 1%.

The above table shows correlation coefficient obtained is .926. If that correlation coefficient .926 (*r count* .926) is referred to the *r table*, it gave a significant level of 1% and an equivalent of .462. The *r* value was bigger than *r-table* value (.926 > .462). It means that there is strong correlation between the two variables, with the significance level of 1%. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (*H_a*) is accepted and the null hypothesis (*H₀*) is rejected. The findings suggest that students' reading speed has a strong relationship with reading comprehension.

The results of both schools affirmed few studies that venture into the relationship between reading speed and reading comprehension. Bell (2001) found that those subjects with extensive reading had achieved higher performance in reading comprehension. In another study by Dyson & Haselgrove (2001), reading speed in the screen of a computer could affect comprehension, but if scrolling pattern is established it produces better comprehension. However, some studies refuted this claim saying that reading speed does not have an advantage of improving reading comprehension (Lai, George, Schwanenflugel & Kuhn, 2014; O'Connor, 2017; Wallt, O'Brien, Haussman, Kloos & Lyby, 2014). Nevertheless, the result of this study contributes to the debate whether there is indeed a relationship between reading speed and reading comprehension.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is a high correlation between students' reading speed and students' reading comprehension in both schools. This shows that both variables for each school are strongly correlated. Based on the result provided, it is recommended that English teachers, as the main simulators in the teaching learning process, to continue giving more opportunities for students to practice reading to increase reading speed and reading comprehension. Besides, students are expected to increase their speed in reading in order to improve their reading comprehension. Improving reading speed techniques, students will increase their brain ability to understand and comprehend texts to the maximum level.

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Article Homepage: <http://rpo.cjc.edu.ph/index.php/slongan/>



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TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Navarez, J. & Diaz, K.R. (2017). Coping mechanisms of Philippine students' left behind by OFW parents. *Slongan*, 3(1), 91–102.

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Coping Mechanisms of Philippine Students' Left Behind by OFW Parents

Jingle S. Navarez & Kirt Anthony R. Diaz

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Guidance and counseling, academic performance, descriptive-correlational design, Multiple Regression Analysis, Philippines

Many students nowadays are experiencing school life without the presence of their parents. While many children have shown a decline in classroom performance while parents are away, many were also found to have performed excellently through various mechanisms. This study employed descriptive-correlational research design to investigate the influence of coping mechanisms towards the academic performance of students with OFW parents. A survey was conducted to students who were performing academically high for the school year 2013–2014 and 2014–2015. Survey questionnaires were given to 142 students from Catholic schools in Davao del Sur while Key Informant Interviews were done to another ten students. Using Multiple Regression Analysis, it was determined that out of the eight coping mechanisms tested only three were found to be significant, namely: active coping, planning and using instrumental support. Based on the findings, it is recommended that schools must define policies that would support the creation of a separate program for students with OFW parents with an emphasis on the significant predictors.

Introduction

In the world today, the increasing number of students that are experiencing school life without the presence of their parents is now a global phenomenon. Some parents leave the comforts of their home to find greener pasture. It is always said that migration is the solution to the rising financial instability of the families but the persistent concerns are on the issues on students being left behind by such migration that have attracted growing attention and grow into a global concern. Despite the fact that many children have experienced a decline in classroom performance while parents are away, many were also found to have performed excellently through various mechanisms. This reality is what encourages many politicians, educators, and scholars to give due attention on this matter and examine the conditions that re-shaped this left behind children.

Today's children need tangible support as they face a range of challenges that extend beyond the cognitive domain (Roberts and Crawford, 2008). Fassler (2005) explain that children who are away from their parents have chances of experiencing descending classroom performance. Students may have difficulty studying due to worry regarding their concerns, as well as the status of parental health and well-being. However, these students have to face the reality of their parents leaving them for a noble reason. Due to lesser chances of getting employed in most developing countries coupled with higher demands for low-wage workers in developed countries, many parents sought employment abroad to support themselves and their families back home. As reported by the United Nations Human Rights (UNHR, 2013), there are currently more than 215 million migrants around the world, many of which are Filipinos. With this number of migrants, one can already assume of the difficulties experienced by children left behind.

The migration of parents affects not only migrant's own lives, but also their family especially to their children left behind putting them at risk and jeopardizing their safety and well-being. Bakker, Elings-Pelsand Reis (2009) pointed out that the reality is that children are significantly affected by

migration. They suffer from depressions and low self-esteem which can lead to behavior problems and risk of losing the right to education as well as poor academic performance and an interruption of schooling.

The data from the POEA (2012) indicate that most of the migrant workers working in over 190 countries around the world are Filipinos and as a consequence, a more pressing concern focuses on children being left-behind. In fact, Tan (2008) discovered that around nine million Filipino children under the age of 18 were left behind by one or both parents due to employment abroad. According to Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2008), one of the main reasons why many decided to work abroad is the children's need for better education. In fact, education is among the top 3 recurring expenses of OFWs' remittances thus, indicating investments in human capital (Custodio & Ang, 2011).

The separation during migration changes the nature of the parent-child relationship. This condition of children left behind can become a source of stress in their daily life. However, people see stressful events as either challenging or threatening (Lazarus, 2000). To deal with these stressful events, there are many coping skills that people can use, and some may prove more effective than others. Therefore, how individual deals with stress and his/her ways of responding to a situation that he/she encountered will depend on his/her coping skills.

Despite the difficulty children face in the absence of their parents, there are some of them who manage to excel in academics. In looking at the impact of migration, findings of researches done in the Philippines, Brazil, Mexico, and other countries show that when parents are away housework burdens of children decreases while learning time at school increases resulting to better academic performance (Acosta, 2006; Hanson & Woodruff, 2003; Kandel & Kao, 2001; Asis, 2006). This scenario manifests an affirmative influence for those students who are academically high performing in school even if their parents are away. The positive influence is due to successful coping skills that create an idea as to how one can make changes in his/her life to make stress more manageable (Jarrey, 2002 as cited in Smith, 2004). Thus, the effectiveness of coping efforts depends on the type of stress, type of individual, and the circumstances surrounding it (Lee et al., 2009). Moreover, the person's ability to manage and face stressful events in his/her life and make that individual on top of or in control of things will eventually result in achieving lives of satisfaction and fulfillment.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the theory of stress and coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) which states that stress and coping is an effort to explain people's method in dealing with stress that was an environmental and internal demand that exceeds a person's resources and endangers his or her well-being. Moreover, coping aims to assess and identifies thoughts and actions that individuals use to respond to stressful situations of daily living (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Thus, the person's ability to manage and face the stressful events in his or her life will make that individual feel on top of or in control of things that will eventually result in achieving lives of satisfaction and fulfillment.

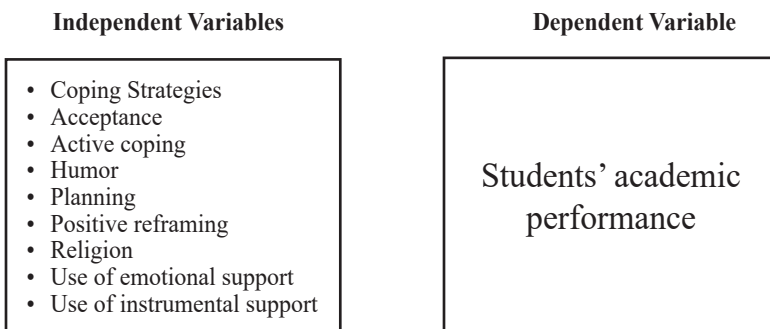


Figure 1. Conceptual Paradigm Showing the Relationship of the Variables of the Study

Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted to determine the level of academic performance and coping mechanisms of students in the private Catholic schools in Davao del Sur school year 2014–2015. It also identified which of the coping mechanisms could significantly predict or influence academic performance of Philippine students' left behind by OFW parents.

Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis advanced in this study was that:

None of the coping mechanisms can predict academic performance of the Philippine students' left behind by OFW parents.

Method

This study employed descriptive-correlational research design and was conducted in Davao del Sur during the school year 2014–2015. The target respondents were chosen using Purposive Sampling Technique. The researchers personally went to the different schools to ask permission from the school heads. Selected respondents were asked to fill out the authorization form stating that their grades and personal views would be used for the study. A total of 142 high performing students from various Catholic high schools in Davao del Sur was the subject of the study. They were sons and daughters of OFW parents. The study used an adopted instrument "Cope Inventory" designed by Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) which measures the coping mechanisms in eight subscales, namely: acceptance, active coping, humor, planning, positive reframing, religion, use of emotional support and use of instrumental support. The students' final general average grade for the school year 2013–2014 and their first grading GPA for the school year 2014–2015 were used to determine their academic performance. Likewise, ten students coming from different schools who got the highest general average grade during the final grading period for the SY 2013–2014 were interviewed and findings were used to deepen the analysis of the quantitative results of the study. In analyzing the data, Descriptive Statistics using mean score was used to establish the level of coping mechanisms and level of students' academic performance. In addition, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was applied to determine which of the coping mechanisms can significantly predict academic performance of Philippine students left behind by OFW parents.

Results and Discussion

Level of Coping Mechanisms of Philippine Students' Left Behind by OFW Parents

Table 1 shows the level of coping mechanisms of Philippine students left behind by OFW parents. Among the eight (8) subscales, religion got the highest mean (4.47). This result indicates that in the absence of either father, mother, or both parents, students with OFW parents have often put their trust in God, seek God's help, find comfort in religion and pray more than usual to cope and overcome challenges in life. This analysis is supported by Pargament (1997 cited in Pargament & Raiya, 2007) when he explained that it is the ability of left behind children to respond to those times when they are faced with limits of one's own power, and that religion gives them the capacity to go beyond personal limitations for solutions. Students who experience challenges without their parents seek spiritual support and increase spiritual connection as a way of coping with challenges (Wachholtz & Sambamoorthi, 2011).

When positive reframing (4.19) used as a coping mechanism, students with OFW parents try to see their difficulties in a different light or see it more in a positive way as well as look for

something good in what is happening. Golin (2011) pointed out that it is always good for OFW children to find positive aspects in the outcomes they regard as failures, and reframe them more positively. Adolescents who employ positive reframing, have more positive reactions and outcomes after experiencing intense victimization (Dempsey, 2010).

Table 1. *Computed level of coping mechanisms of Philippine students' left behind by OFW parents.*

Coping Mechanisms	Mean	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
Acceptance	3.98	Agree	Oftentimes done
Active coping	3.67	Agree	Oftentimes done
Humor	2.91	Undecided	Sometimes done
Planning	3.88	Agree	Oftentimes done
Positive reframing	4.19	Agree	Oftentimes done
Religion	4.47	Agree	Oftentimes done
Use of emotional support	3.65	Agree	Oftentimes done
Use of instrumental support	3.73	Agree	Oftentimes done

Regarding acceptance as a coping mechanism which has mean score of 3.98, the students are used to the idea that their situation happened and that they learn to live with it. This result is supported by Carver et al. (1989 cited in Aldebot & Weisman de Mamani, 2009) when they argued that acceptance as a coping mechanism is found to be more beneficial than others for children may learn to accept reality for the meantime while their parents are away. It is also the most effective coping mechanisms in dealing with disappointments and hindrances for this can help people to keep up their spirits and feel satisfied because it has a positive effect (Stoeber & Janssen, 2011).

When it comes to planning as a coping mechanism with a mean score of 3.88, it means that students try to come up with a strategy about what to do. They also think how problems can be best handled as well as think deeply about what steps to take when difficult times are present. In fact, Parrenas (2000) said that there is a need for OFW children to prepare and arrange on what to do with the current condition for them to be more productive.

The use of instrumental support (3.73) also helps the students with OFW parents cope with challenges in life. They do it by trying to get advice from someone about what to do, learn more about the situation, and ask people who have had similar experiences with them. Many experts claim that social support can assist a person cope with the demands of stress (Schwarzer & Leppin, 1989, 1991; Veiel & Baumann, 1992) as well as concentrate on deriving meaning from the stressful experience (Brannon & Feist, 2009). The use of instrumental support is available to anybody through linkages and social ties to other individuals, organizations, groups, and the community as a whole (Ozbay *et al.*, 2007).

When active coping is being used (3.67), students with OFW parents try to concentrate their efforts on doing something about their situation and to take direct action to get around the problem. It is also avenue for these students to function well and move forward. Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) explained that students left behind need to take active steps to remove or avoid the pain or to enhance its effects which include initiating direct action, increasing one's efforts, and trying to execute a coping attempt in a stepwise fashion.

When students use emotional support (3.65) as a coping mechanism, they get emotional support from friends or relatives, talk to someone about how he or she feels, and discuss his or her feelings with someone. Burleson (2003) pointed out that when feeling hurt, disappointed, or upset, virtually everyone would like to receive sensitive support from caring others. Goldsmith (2011) added that emotional support is helping to lift someone to higher ground so an individual can see their way through the difficulty. Having someone to rely on is one of the best parts of being in a relationship.

In the final analysis, it can be said that all of the above cited seven subscales or coping mechanisms were being exhibited, applied and were seen as clearly evident, though in varying degrees, in the day

to day lives of students with OFW parents as measures to overcome challenges in life.

Interestingly, humor as coping mechanism got the lowest mean of 2.91. It is described as undecided and interpreted as sometimes done with statements such as make fun of the situation, make jokes about it, and laugh about the situation. The result implies that students rarely apply this mechanism to cope with challenges. In contrast, however, Scott (2014) stressed that applying sense of humor during difficult times can help normalize one's experience, and keep things from appearing too overwhelming or scary. He further assumed that proper and timely application and usage of sense humor can keep people and relationships strong. However, when the respondents were asked during the interview why they seldom use this coping mechanism, all of them explained that when they experience life's challenges, especially that their parents are away, they cannot just laugh at it because of the sacrifices of their parents. That is why they are more serious in facing life's difficulties.

Level of Academic Performance of Philippine Students' Left Behind by OFW Parents

Table 2 shows the distribution of the respondents according to each level. The table further shows that among the 142 respondents, there are only 32 or 22.54% that belong to advanced level and the remaining 110 (77.46%) respondents occupy the proficient level.

Table 2. Distribution of students according to academic performance.

Numerical Value	Rating	Population	Percentage
90% and above	Advanced	32	22.54
85–89%	Proficient	110	77.46
Total		142	100

Table 3 presents the level of academic performance of Philippine students' left behind by OFW parents. Results reveal that the average academic performance of the respondents is at 88.00 percent and described as being at the proficient level. This result means that the students at this level have developed the fundamental knowledge and skills and core understandings, and can transfer them independently through authentic performance tasks.

Table 3. Computed level of academic performance of Philippine students' left behind by OFW parents.

Academic Performance	Mean	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
Grades	88.00	Proficient	The student at this level has developed the fundamental knowledge and skills and core understandings, and can transfer them independently through authentic performance tasks.

The result presented in Table 3 is expected because the participants of the study are students who are known to have high performance in their academic tasks. In the study of Edillon (2008), he discovered that there were higher chances that children whose parents are working abroad will join academic organizations and participate in extracurricular activities; they are more likely to receive school awards compared with the children of non-OFWs. However, this result deviates from what Fassler (2005) said that children might experience a decline in classroom performance while parents are away. In fact, Asis and Ruiz-Marave (2013) explained that honors and awards received by children of overseas Filipinos during graduation exercises or convocation activities tend to be viewed as the exception rather than the norm. During the KII, participants stressed that they need to focus and aim for high grades because they feel

the sacrifices of their parents and they need to show high grades for their parents to be happy. Another student also said that high grades were the rewards they can give to their parents while making sacrifices abroad.

Coping Mechanisms that predict academic performance of Philippine students' left behind by OFW parents

Table 4 shows that when regression equation $AP = \beta_o + \beta_1Ac + \beta_2AC + \beta_3Hu + \beta_4Pln + \beta_5PR + \beta_6Rel + \beta_7UE + \beta_8UI + \epsilon_i$ was tested using multiple regression analysis, results from the ANOVA table show that the sig-value is .000 which is found to be below the .05 level of significance. This implies that overall, the model is considered to be significant and that the model fits the data.

However, when looking at the regression coefficient of each of the independent variables, only three (3) of the eight coping mechanisms tested were found to be significant, namely: (1) Active Coping (p-value = .041); (2) Planning (p-value = .001); and (3) Use of Instrumental Support (p-value = .001). These results imply that of all the factors included in the model, only three can be able to explain the variations in the dependent variable which is academic performance of high performing students with OFW parents. Thus, the estimated regression model can be mathematically presented as:

$AP = 77.257 \text{ (constant)} + (-) 1.763 \text{ (Active Coping)} + 1.667 \text{ (Planning)} + 3.367 \text{ (Use of Instrumental Support)} + \epsilon_i$

The value of the beta coefficient for Active Coping implies that holding all other variables in the regression constant, its coefficient indicates that for every 1 unit change in the participant's level of active coping would give a corresponding -1.763 decrease in his or her academic performance. This implies that when students are using active coping, the lower it would be for his or her academic performance. The high negative beta coefficient with p-value of .041 for active coping confirms the empirical findings which claimed that there is a significant negative correlation between active coping and academic performance. This finding is supported by Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) when they claimed that active coping can be a process of taking active steps to try to remove or avoid the stressor or to enhance its effects which include initiating direct action, increasing one's efforts, and trying to execute a coping attempt in a stepwise fashion. Thus, students left behind can perform their tasks and responsibilities even if they are depressed or in a painful situation. The participants of the KII also revealed that they used active coping that helped them continue to study even if they are depressed. They try to suppress the negative emotions but reveal that sometimes it will not take too long. Thus, making them confess that they are not sure if they can be consistent of getting high grades.

Table 4. Regression coefficients of the independent variables.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	77.257	2.899		26.646	.000
Acceptance	.074	.376	.017	.198	.844
Active coping	-1.763	.854	-.309	-2.065	.041
Humor	-.174	.213	-.062	-.815	.416
Planning	1.667	.486	.296	3.430	.001
Positive Reframing	.197	.478	.037	.413	.680
Religion	-.373	.456	-.066	-.817	.415
Use of Emotional support	-.218	.273	-.067	-.798	.426
Use of instrumental support	3.367	.957	.549	3.517	.001

Constant	=	77.257
R ²	=	.268
R Adjusted	=	.224
F Value	=	6.090
Sig Value	=	.000
DF	=	141

With regards to planning as a coping mechanism, holding all other variables in the regression constant, its beta coefficient indicates that for every 1 unit change in the participant's level of financial demand would give a corresponding 1.667 increase in his or her academic performance. The p-value of 0.001 with positive beta coefficient confirms the empirical findings which claim that there is a significant positive relationship between planning and academic performance. These results imply that if the respondent's level of planning increases, it would also increase his or her level of academic performance.

There is a need for these children left behind to have a planning skill which refers to the actions, strategies and thinking of the steps and how best they can handle their problems (Schmalzbauer, 2004 cited in Graham & Jordan, 2011). Epstien (2003) also pointed out that planning is more than making choices. It is a choice with intention and that an individual begins with a specific goal or purpose in mind that results in the choice. She further explained that planning involves deciding an action and predicting interactions, recognizing problems and proposing solutions, and anticipating consequences and reactions. Respondents also reveal during the KII that in a situation whereby parents are not around because of being an OFW, they need to plan how to manage their time for studying, playing and hanging out with their friends.

Regarding the Use of Instrumental support as a coping mechanism, holding all other variables in the regression constant, its beta coefficient indicates that for every 1 unit change in the participant's Use of Instrumental Support would give a corresponding 3.361 increase in his or her academic performance. The p-value of 0.001 with positive beta coefficient confirms the empirical findings which claimed that there is a significant positive relationship between the Use of Instrumental Support and academic performance. These results imply that if the respondent's level of Use of Instrumental Support increases, it would also increase his or her level of academic performance.

In the situation of students left behind by OFW parents, Lavine, and Munsch (2011) pointed out that disclosure is the first essential step for getting social support. In addition, adolescent should be involved in at least one protective factor (e.g., family, school, and church) which facilitates the development of strong personal relationships, which provide encouragement and advice, which in turn facilitate the development of a positive value system or world view and healthy coping strategies (Grant, 2005). Participants of the KII reveal that the presence of family, friends and other significant persons in their life played a crucial role especially when they have difficulties and worries. The time when they can listen to the negative and positive emotions of the OFW children are enough chances to be inspired and continue to focus on to their studies. In fact, another KII participant said that the time when their parents have time in the net for chatting and calling, it gave them so much satisfaction and reminded them to exert more effort in their studies.

All other factors like Acceptance, Humor, Positive Reframing, Religion, and the Use of Emotional Support were found to be not good predictors of academic performance as manifested by sig values which were all greater than 0.05 level of significance set for this study.

In its entirety, however, the combined explanatory and predictive power of the three significant independent variables is considered to be low because it could not account for 73.2 percent of the variation in the academic performance. This is manifested in the model summary table which shows that the value of the R² is .268 which implies that only 26.8 percent of the variations in academic performance can be explained by the three significant variables. The remaining 73.2 percent unexplained variation could be accounted for by other variables not included in the model.

The limitations of the study revolved only on the following: First, respondents were only the high school students who were studying in the various Catholic schools in Davao del Sur for the school year 2014-2015. Second, academic performance of the students' covered only their final general average grade for the school year 2013-2014 and their general average grade for the first grading period for the school year 2014-2015. The students were only those who belong to the proficient and advanced levels for the school year 2013-2014. Finally, respondents were the students' left behind by OFW parents from Davao del Sur.

Conclusion

In analyzing the findings of the study, some significant conclusions were derived. First, the level of academic performance of students' with OFW parents was at the proficient level. This result was also expected because the respondents of the study were the academically high performing students in school. It is concluded that despite the situation where mother, father, or both parents are not around during challenging times, students' left behind are capable of achieving high academic performance given the right coping mechanisms. With parents' absence, technological mechanisms like cellular phones and computers have become the default substitute for personal parenting especially in the motivation of parents in the academic performance of their children. That these children also aim for high grades because they want their parents to be happy and it is only the reward they can give to their parents who sacrifice a lot.

Finally, among the eight subscales of coping mechanisms, only three (active coping, planning, and use of instrumental support) can predict academic performance of students left behind especially for those who are high performing in school. It is concluded that students with OFW parents must not rely too much on oneself (active coping) to overcome challenges in life because it may result to burn out and frustrations and possibly lower academic performances. In contrast, proper planning is a skill that students with OFW parents must possess because it is through this mechanism that they will be able to manage well their time and think about the correct steps on how they can best handle the situation and able to move and become more productive. It is also concluded that students with OFW parents must increase usage of instrumental support because the need to include efforts of the family for those who care for the children is a positive side of putting them in a strong social relationship. The use of instrumental support as a coping mechanism can facilitate the development of strong interpersonal relationship which they can provide encouragement and advice to children left behind. The need for caregivers to look into the general satisfaction of children under their care can make them feel better and make life manageable even in their current situations and conditions.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings and conclusion drawn from the study, the following recommendations are offered: 1. That teachers and guidance counselors will be aware of the personal, family profile and the effect of migration on the students with OFW parents so that coping-up activities will be provided; 2. That school authorities will provide more religious undertakings to nurture and increase spiritual connection of the students; 3. That school authorities will ensure that the guardians of students with OFW parents will be given sessions and assistance to maintain a significant relationship and ensure that students are in good hands to preserve family culture; 4. That the result of this study will be the guide in creating a proposed support program in coping activities and on the enhancement of academic performance of students left behind by OFW parents; 5. That a case analysis should be conducted to ask and gather more data on other variables that came out to be not good predictors of academic performance. The findings will help schools, especially the guidance office, in crafting a more comprehensive plan for students with OFW parents; and 6. That a future research should be conducted using the same model and would involve more students with OFW parents regardless of their academic performance in school.

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