



**BATTLE AGAINST STIGMATA: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF
BALIK-ARAL SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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ABSTRACT

This study analysed the lived experiences of Balik-Aral SHS students. The goal was to feature the change of perspective in terms of academic performance and behavioural aspect of the respondents after being dropped from school due to engaging from different vices. This has been done through a qualitative research design, specifically case study.

Furthermore, the design used in the study allows the researcher to conduct an interview and to reflect deeper on the study composed of two identified SHS Balik-Aral student in Camp Vicente Lim Integrated School. Moreover, there are five major themes that are being realized from the challenges of the SHS Balik-Aral students such as: (1) Custodial Conflict, (2) Financial Scarcity, (3) Vices, (4) School Conflicts, and (5) Depression. On the other hand, there are four major themes on the coping mechanisms that they have used such as: (1) Change of Residency, (2) Academic Peer Influence, (3) Familial Support, and (4) Social Assistance.

The result of this study served as the basis for making a Dropout Prevention/Graduation Completion Plan. The plan has its specific objectives to increase the graduation rate, to reduce the school's dropout rate, and to decrease the school's truancy rate.

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I. Introduction

This phenomenological study features the school perspective on dropping out. Several qualitative studies or interpretative studies have considered how school themselves engage in practices or create conditions that push certain types of students out of school, especially those who exhibit the social and academic factors.

Categorically, social risk includes demographic factors, associated with a higher likelihood of school difficulties: race, age, language-minority status, gender, family income, parents' education, and family structure (Lee, et.al. 2003). On the other hand, academic factors deal with students' school behaviour and performance, reflect the actual manifestation of school-related problems (Lee, et.al. 2003).

In line with this, Camp Vicente Lim Integrated School (CVLIS) is encountering difficulty when it comes to eradicating the instance of dropout. Despite of the series of symposium being conducted by the school administrators among the parents and counselling of the guidance counsellor and class advisers, the number has not yet being zeroed.

In this study, the researcher captured the different anecdotes of the students who dropped-out or failed from school and became a Balik-aral. It took note of how they were able to manage the circumstances, specifically on how they end up victoriously amidst the hurdles that nearly made them give up. It is also noteworthy to understand how these children were rebooted and motivated to continue learning despite their experience of dropping out or failing their

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subjects. How they championed over the obstacles and what inspired them to carry on are interesting cases needed to be studied and shared to students who are in the same dilemma.

In this case, the school administrators as well as the teachers would also be alerted by the facts and reasons of the students along with their first-hand experiences that let them to decide and return to schooling.

The researcher proposed a Dropout Prevention/ Graduation Completion Plan that was adopted from Jackson Public School by Dr. Freddrick Murray, Interim Superintendent, written and approved by the board last November 28, 2017 in Michigan, USA. The researcher modified the plan and anchored the interventions based on the *School Improvement Plan (SIP) 2019-2022* as well as to the *Heart and Hand Extended for Learners' Progress (HELP)* of the Division of Calamba City.

Statement of the Problem

The main objective of this phenomenological inquiry is to look into the lived experiences of Senior High School (SHS) students who have experienced to dropout to school for at least one year or more and became a Balik-Aral.

What is the essence of the lived experiences of Balik-Aral SHS students?

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Corollary Questions:

1. How do the respondents describe their experiences with regard to the social and academic risks that they have encountered before dropping-out to school and eventually decided to be a Balik-Aral?
2. What themes emerged from the study?
3. Based on the findings, what Dropout Prevention/ Graduation Completion Plan can be proposed?

Scope and Limitation of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine and understand the lived experiences of “Balik-Aral” Senior High School students who experienced to be dropped or failed in school due to committing themselves in different vices like alcohol, cigarette and even marijuana.

This study used qualitative research design in which the researcher conducted interviews. The researcher included two (2) known “Balik-Aral” SHS students in Camp Vicente Lim Integrated School (CVLIS).

This study catered the students who dropped-out or failed from school for at least one school year or more and decided to return to school afterwards. This study was limited to two (2) “Balik-Aral” SHS students who experienced different challenges before and during the times that

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they decided to stop from schooling due to different vices. However, it is also focused on the coping mechanisms that they have used in order to overcome the identified challenges.

II. Literature Review

Education. It is the passport to the future. Today, the world needs smart and globally-competitive people who provide the demands of commercialization, industrialization and development. Without education, the world will be blind; the truths will be withheld and hidden behind the walls of ignorance and countless generations will be estranged from knowledge and wisdom that only education can suffice. Thus, it is life itself. With the helping hands of the teachers who enable the children to see the difference between innovation and stagnant the world begins to take shape and reshape into modification, improvement and speedy progress. Parents apparently send their children to school to acquire education which is a powerful legacy any child would inherit (Arum, Roksa, and Budig, 2008).

It is a tool to explore limitless opportunities to improve the mind, enhance skills, and draw out the best from each student. Education connotes an implicit means of living – the rationale that drives most parents to provide the best education to their children at all cost. It is perceived that education is a ladder to employment, development, and industry. Moreover, bringing children to school and making them stay therein until graduation is a matter that involves a scrupulous effort of the parents, teachers, and children themselves. it is easier indeed to send

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them to school but to make them stay until the end of the school year is an arduous task (Arum et.al., 2008; Bridgeland et.al.,2006; Oghuvbu, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2004).

The major concern in basic education is ensuring that students stay in school until they complete their education. Dropping out is a serious problem because it hinders the individual student to assert education as fundamental human right. Internationally, the individual right to education has been purportedly affirmed in many treaties and conventions a in the 1948 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (UNESCO, 2008).

There is an across-the-board consensus that the school dropout problem has reached epidemic proportions globally and has become a problem facing the education industry round the world. The most important concept in preventing school dropout or promoting completion is student engagement. there is a great deal of proof that dropping out of school is a process of disengagement from school and the learning that accumulates over the years, often beginning early in elementary school (Arum et.al., 2008; Bridgeland et.al.,2006; Oghuvbu, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2004).

Students. They should be active participants in their education. They also should contribute to classroom discussions by not only answering direct questions posed by the teacher, but answers questions posed by their peers. Students should feel free to ask questions, or express

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their own ideas about a subject, not only to their teacher, but also their peers. Their role is also to be motivated about their learning (Bailey, 2010).

Life transitions. According to Kralik (2005), transition is the way we respond to the changes in our live particularly when we experience the change as disruptive. Disruptive change was unwanted and/or unexpected. Times of transition can be very difficult periods in people’s lives. We experience transition when one chapter of our life is over and another is beginning.

Depression. It is a mood or disorder characterized by persistently low mood and the feeling of sadness and loss of interest (MacGill, 2017).

Challenges. Challenges and problems are important parts of life that give experiences, make learn and help to become wiser and stronger. Problems make people grow and shape. The biggest problem people have is that they hope for a life without problems, this is an impossible goal and will lead to a boring life without character. All have problems – small or large – the difference is how to deal with the problems and challenges that occur (Nesland, 2017).

Coping mechanisms. It can be conceptualized as a combination of coping style and range of implementable coping strategies. Coping style is a mixture of attribution style (perceived source of stress, locus of control, optimistic or pessimistic outlook on finding a solution) and personality characteristics, such as risk tolerance, sense of self-efficacy, and introversion or extroversion. Coping strategies reflect the repertoire of responses to the stress that the individual

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has available and can use successfully. Whereas personality is relatively fixed, coping strategies can be taught explicitly or through modelling. Coping strategies can be divided into two major categories: emotion-focused coping strategy, and problem-focused coping strategy proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (Sahler, Karr, 2014). Emotion-focused coping was identified to have five strategies and these include disclaiming, escape-avoidance, accepting responsibility or blame, exercising self-control and positive reappraisal. This emotion-focused coping mechanism tends to change the meaning of the stressor and transfer attention away from it. On the other hand, the problem-focused coping strategies try to deal with the root cause of the problem. People having this kind of coping mechanism find out information on the problem to learn new skills to resolve the problem. Most of the students used emotion-focused coping strategies for they find it easier than the problem-focused coping strategies for its aim of changing only the personal meaning of the stress.

III. METHODOLOGY

In this research study, descriptive qualitative method particularly phenomenology is used. Phenomenology is a study that attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives and understandings of a particular situation. It is reliving the experiences of the participants involved in the study and going deeper into their thoughts, identifying the essence of the experience as

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described by the participants, through lengthy discussions (Campbell, 2011; Creswell, 2007; Speziale and Carpenter, 2007; Willis, 2011).

Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design to attest the lived experiences of a 'Balik-Aral students. To fully understand the journey of the respondents in terms of the identified challenges and coping mechanisms, case study was employed.

A case study can be defined as an intensive study about the person, a group of people or a unit, which is aimed to generalize over several units. It also has been described as an intensive, systematic investigation of a single individual, group, community or some other unit in which the researcher examines in-depth data relating to several variables (Campbell, 2011; Creswell, 2007; Speziale and Carpenter, 2007; Willis, 2011).

Respondents of the Study

The participant of this study was two (2) select Balik-Aral Senior High School students in Camp Vicente Lim Integrated School.

This study's participants came from a purposive sample. A purposive sample is a non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (Mack, N. et.al., 2005).

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Research Instrument

The researcher used interview guide questions in order to reveal the necessary data that led the researcher to identify the major themes for challenges as well as the major themes under coping mechanisms.

Data Gathering

It is an appropriate instrument in the study wherein the researcher envisioned and explored the actual experiences of the participants who dropout to school and became a Balik-Aral of the current year.

In the data collection of the study, the following processes namely: in-depth interview with the study-informants, conduct focus group discussion with the participants and take note on crucial information were done. Before conducting the actual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with the study participants, the researcher made sure that ethical considerations were properly observed in which confidentiality is the top priority.

IV. RESULTS

This chapter presents the participants' experiences relating their insights and viewpoints which include conclusions based from the data collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. The research question supplied data results from the respondents.

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What is the essence of the lived experiences of Balik-Aral SHS students?

Table 1. MAJOR THEMES AND SUB-THEMES (CHALLENGES)

Major Themes	Sub-Themes
Custodial Conflict	Separation of parents
Financial Scarcity	Monetary insufficiency
Vices	Smoking, alcohol drinking, drug addiction
School Conflicts	Tardiness, absenteeism, poor academic performance
Depression	Low self-esteem, melancholic

The table shows the challenges encountered by the Balik-Aral students. There are 5 main themes that the participants experienced and made them to decide and dropped schooling such as (1) Custodial Conflict, (2) Financial Scarcity, (3) Vices, (4) School Conflicts, (5) Depression.

Table 2. MAJOR THEMES AND SUB-THEMES (COPING MECHANISMS)

Major Themes	Sub-Themes
Change of residency	Living with other relatives aside from parents
Academic Peer Influence	Seeking support from classmates during collaborative activities
Familial Support	Asking monetary support from other relatives
Social Assistance	Comfort from teachers and friends

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The table implies the coping mechanisms of the Balik-Aral students. There are 4 strategies that the participants used to continue their studies such as (1) Change of Residency, (2) Academic Peer Influence, (3) Familial Support, (4) Social Assistance.

V. DISCUSSION

From the findings of the study, the researcher observed how students were affected due to custodial conflict. There is indeed a great implication if children are not living with both parents. Financial adversities have huge impact to the students at risk of dropping out (SARDO). Likewise, when students live in a community which does not help them to develop their optimum potential and negative influences (e.g. cigarette smoking, alcohol drinking and committing to illegal drugs) surround the students' environment, the risk of dropping out will definitely upsurge.

This study attested the experiences of students at risk of dropping out to school made the researcher to come up with a conclusion that school heads, teachers and community can do a feasible plan to lessen the increasing rate dropouts. Financial constraints, job loss and chronic unemployment, addiction to alcohol and illegal substances can lead to frequent feud within the family. This can be unbearable for the emotions of children; they lose interest in attending school pointing to low academic performance that may result in dropout (Woititz, 2010).

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However, the respondents, despite of their age, have proven that behind all the challenges that they have encountered are their flaming dreams to have better future through fueling themselves with knowledge and wisdom using a key called education.

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