EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN WRITING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Alona L. Ignacio

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover the experiences of senior high school students in writing qualitative research. This study was anchored on the Cognitive Process Theory of Writing by Linda Flower and John Hayes (1981), Collaborative Learning Theory by Lev Vygotsky's (1934), and Self-efficacy theory by Albert Bandura (1986). A total of 20 senior high school students from the secondary public schools in the Municipality of Braulio E. Dujali participated, where half of them were engaged in the in-depth interview, and the others were invited to a focus group discussion. The interview revealed their experiences including gaining knowledge in writing qualitative research, having difficulty in working as a group, having insufficient resources, having time constraints, and encountering difficulty during the process of writing qualitative research.

This lead the students to apply certain coping mechanisms for themselves in writing qualitative research. The findings further revealed that seeking assistance, doing time management practices, delegating research tasks, and utilizing online resources, related studies and readings are helpful in writing qualitative research. Finally, their insights expressed that rationalizing the relevance of qualitative research through experiences, developing the right attitude in qualitative research writing, emphasizing the importance of time management, and developing the students' 21st-century learning skills are essential in writing qualitative research.

KEYWORDS: *senior high school students, qualitative research, qualitative-phenomenological study, Braulio E. Dujali, Davao del Norte*
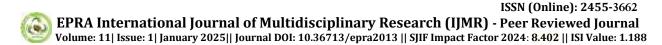
INTRODUCTION

Research writing is one of the critical academic writing tasks in Senior High School that needs creative thinking and problem-solving skills. Particularly, research writing requires effort and time in selecting feasible and impactful topics, choosing the appropriate methods, gathering and analyzing information from participants/respondents, and creating well-organized and grammatically correct sentences. In addition, since Senior High School Students are beginners in research, writing research can be challenging. Moreover, research writing is an arduous task that requires students to have a lot of knowledge in writing skills. While teachers work to the best of their abilities to teach research, some students still struggle in research writing as many types of research studies revealed that writing research is a serious and common issue experienced by senior high school students.

In the global context, studies showed the challenges of students in writing research. In China, a study showed that students encounter problems in research proposal writing skills. The major problems they encountered included the identification of the research gaps, proper critiquing of the related literature; and gathering sufficient data to support the research proposal (Acheampong, 2021). A study also in Jordan revealed that 71% of the students have no background knowledge about the style of writing research, 78% of them encountered problems in insufficient knowledge about the research paper writing process, and 60% faced difficulty in paraphrasing the information from their resources (Altikriti,

2021). Furthermore, the results of the study in Indonesia reported that students struggled in determining the research topic to be investigated, 60% of the students encountered difficulties in the research method like determining the research subject, comparing the data, and designing an instrument, and 75% of the students asserted that interpreting, transforming, and concluding the data was a difficult task to accomplish (Sitompul & Anditasari, 2022).

In the Philippines, Senior High School students experienced various challenges in writing their Practical Research. As reported in the findings of the study conducted in Laguna, students' common errors in Practical Research 1 manuscripts were: (1) insufficient number of sources, (2) inaccurate coverage of the problem and lack of detailed information about the problem, (3) lack of transitional devices and logical sequences, (4) poor sentence construction and frequent grammar errors; and (5) missing and inappropriate citations (Yasto, 2022). Also, a study conducted in Eastern Samar revealed that the student researchers most encountered challenges was financial problems used in internet surfing and printing documents (Siguan & Ecija, 2020). Furthermore, in Tacloban, the study shows that senior high school students faced challenges in writing research such as difficulty in finding and constructing a review of related literature, absence of collaboration among their group members, time constraints, and lack of academic support in learning (Peñeda and Caidoy, 2023).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry was to discover and understand the general lived experiences in writing qualitative research, coping mechanisms, and insights encountered by Senior High School students in the public schools of Braulio E. Dujali District, Division of Davao del Norte.

At this stage in the research, the lived experiences of the senior high school students in writing qualitative research will be generally defined as the positive and negative experiences of the senior high school students encountered in their journey of writing qualitative research in their Practical Research 1 course which will be properly documented and highlighted.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of Senior High School students in writing qualitative research?
2. How do the Senior High School students cope with the challenges they encountered in writing qualitative research?
3. What are the insights of the Senior High School students on writing qualitative research that can be shared with others?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative method specifically a phenomenological approach to give a detailed description of the experiences of the research participants. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is an approach to inquiry as a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social human problem. Moreover, in qualitative research, the researchers collect and analyze data deductively and inductively to establish patterns or themes and make interpretations of the meaning of data. Given this definition, a qualitative approach is appropriate to use in a study that needs to be explored, and that needs a detailed understanding of the contexts of the participants.

Research Participants

The participants of this study were the 20 Grade 12 Senior High School students from the selected four (4) public secondary schools of Braulio E. Dujali District, Division of Davao del Norte. The number of research participants in phenomenology according to Polkinghorne (1989, as cited in Isik, 2022), stated that a reasonable sample size recommended for phenomenological studies that the researchers can interview may range from 5-25 individuals depending on the topic a researcher is studying. In this study, the participants were composed of ten (10) students for in-depth interviews (IDI) and ten (10) students for focus-group discussion (FGD).

Purposive sampling was used in selecting the participants in this study which means that the researcher selected the participants to be the informants. According to Stratton (2024), purposive sampling is a method of selecting participants in which a researcher will choose the research participants from the population of interest based on the characteristics, experiences, or criteria. The sample selected is then used to represent the broader group or population being investigated.

Data Collection Procedure

In gathering the data for this study, I followed the step-by-step process. Prior to the conduct of this study, I submitted my protocol to the Research Ethics Committee of St. Mary's College of Tagum, Inc. to secure the Ethics Clearance Certificate for them to fully assess the appropriateness of my study. Second, I asked a permission from the Dean of Graduate Education to conduct my study and secured an endorsement letter. Then, I submitted my permit, endorsement letter, and guidelines in conducting my study to the Schools Division Superintendent of the Department of Education, Division of Davao del Norte. After the verification of my documents, I sent the approved letter of permission from the Superintendent to the School Principal of the secondary schools of Braulio E. Dujali district where my participants are connected. This time, after the permission to conduct the study was granted by the school principals, I conducted an orientation to the identified participants about the purpose, risks, and benefits of my study. In addition, I also gave an orientation on the consent forms that they are going to sign. Aside from that, during the orientation, I gave a copy of the Data Privacy Notice for Research Participants wherein the collection, utilization, disclosure, and lawful basis for collecting and processing of personal data of the participants are specified. During the conduct of orientation and interview, the participants were allowed to use a face mask, a cap, or any material to hide their identity.

Data Analysis

Data analysis of this study was carried out after transcribing the responses of the research participants from in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions. According to Creswell (2013), data analysis is a method by which researchers condense their data into a more comprehensible format to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon being explored. He stated that the process of analyzing the data involves data coding and thematic analysis.

According to Creswell (2013) data coding in qualitative analysis is placing the text data in categories and label them with a term. In my study, I employed coding to categorize the reflected concepts expressed by my research participants. I read repeatedly the transcripts to familiarize the data from my participants. Next, I identified and highlight the recurring significant codes and patterns in the data. Then, I assigned codes and labels to the sectioned data with its respective categories.

In line with this, Braun and Claurke (2006) said that the foundational method for analyzing qualitative research is through thematic analysis. In the context of my study, eventually, I turned the cluster of codes into themes. In line with these, I made sure that only the codes that support the themes will remain. I also discarded the information that is not significant in creating potential themes. Furthermore, I ensured that each theme will also represent meaning in relevance to the phenomenon that I will be studying. Applying the thematic analysis in my study will help me notice the recurring and meaningful patterns found in the interview transcripts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Experiences of Senior High School Students in Writing Qualitative Research
Theme 1: Gaining Knowledge in Writing Qualitative Research

Writing qualitative research provides senior high school students with valuable knowledge about the conventions of research writing. Since it is their first experiences conducting research, it offers an excellent opportunity to learn essential skills such as gathering and analyzing data. Additionally, engaging in qualitative research serves as a platform for improving their technical writing abilities, particularly grammar. Furthermore, it introduces students to fundamental principles of research ethics including the importance of avoiding plagiarism. As IDI01 mentioned that, *"We learned a lot of things needed in research such as its proper ways, steps and process which I considered as my positive experience."* Moreover, FGD05 stated that, *"Due to the continuous checking of our teacher, it improved our grammar. We learned how to avoid redundancy, how to use past and present tense, and when to use pronouns."* On the other hand, IDI09 shared that during data gathering, she learned to write the information gathered ethically by not plagiarizing it. She cited that, *"The positive experience that I experienced as first-timer in research was learning how to write research. I learned how to gather and write data without plagiarizing."*

Theme 2: Having Difficulty in Working as a Group

Writing qualitative research is a collaborative requirement for senior high school students, where they work in groups to create their research paper. However, students faced challenges in research particularly with group dynamics. Common issues include dealing with uncooperative group members, lack of urgency of the group members in meeting deadlines, and difficulties in coordinating group meetings due to the geographical distance between members' residences. These challenges highlight the importance of fostering teamwork and effective communication in collaborative research projects. In line with this, IDI01 stated that, *"One of the difficulties we had in writing qualitative was the uncooperative groupmates."* On the other hand, the participants highlighted also their difficulty in gathering as a group to work on the research task due to distant residency among the group members. FGD02 shared that, *"Each of our groupmates resided in far and different residences which made us difficult to convene."* Furthermore, the participants also highlighted having lack of urgency of the group members in submitting the research task. IDI09 revealed that, *"The negative effect was having group members who submitted the assigned tasks late. I had to adjust my time."*

Theme 3: Having Insufficient Resources

Access to computers and internet plays an important role in 21st-century education. However, senior high school students experienced lack of resources such as having lack of computers or laptop, poor internet connections, and lack of financial resources for surfing internet and printing documents. In this instance, it becomes difficult for the students to submit the research tasks on time. Moreover, students have difficulty in writing qualitative research because some of them only borrow laptops from other groupmates. In addition, some students utilize only cellphones for typing which became a struggle for them. In line with this, IDI03 emphasized the impact of having no laptop in writing research. She uttered that, *"Due to the lack of resources like laptops, it took us a longer time to finish it."* Seemingly, FGD05 highlighted her struggle in having insufficient resources in writing qualitative research especially having poor internet connections. She cited that, *"Having lack of internet connection because the signal is slow."* Moreover, IDI01 stressed the lack of financial resources for internet surfing and for printing documents needed in writing qualitative research. She said that, *"There were also times that we lack resources, we did not have load for researching. Also, we had a limited budget for printing which made our experiences difficult."*

Theme 4: Having Time Constraints

Another theme that emerged in the experiences of senior high school students in writing qualitative research is encountering time constraints. The participants shared that writing qualitative research is time-consuming because of its long process. Aside from that, there were also requirements from other subjects that they needed to comply. This made the participants to have time conflict and encountered a difficulty in managing their time. In line with this, IDI01 stated that, *"There were also times that we had many things to do in a certain time in school. Aside from research, we also had other subjects to settle. As a result, we encountered time conflict and we get confused on what to do first."* Meanwhile, FGD01 emphasized taking a long time to accomplish because of a long process in writing qualitative research. She said that, *"The negative experiences or challenges that I encountered while writing our qualitative research was having time constraints because it was very time-consuming."* Moreover, FGD03 shared about having lack of time management in writing qualitative research. She articulated that,*"For me, the negative experience was sleeping late because of lack of time management."*

Theme 5: Encountering Difficulty During the Process of Writing Qualitative Research

The participants expressed that they encountered difficulty during the process of writing qualitative research. They enumerated that they struggled in gathering the data from their participants, transcribing the responses of the participants and constructing the review of related literature. In gathering the data, the senior high school students expressed their difficulty in dealing with their participants due to their participants' tight schedules. In line with this, IDI06 conveyed that, *"The negative experiences we had was the difficulty in data collection knowing that some of the participants were busy and meeting tight deadlines."* Furthermore, FGD03 expressed her challenges in transcribing the data being gathered from the participants. She said, *"The negative experiences that we encountered in writing our qualitative research was in transcribing. It was difficult because there were many words like "uhmm", and "ahhh."* Moreover, FGD03 expressed her struggles in writing the review of related literature. She uttered that, *"Since our study was rare, we found it difficult to find RRL."*

Coping Mechanism of Senior High School Students in Writing Qualitative Research

Theme 1: Seeking Assistance

Seeking assistance is one of the themes that emerged in the senior high school students' coping mechanisms in writing qualitative research. The students expressed that to address their difficulties in writing qualitative research, they asked academic assistance from their teachers along the way. Additionally, students inquired research-related ideas to their co-researchers and seek financial assistance from their families. In line with this, IDI01 mentioned that, *"Since it was our first time conducting qualitative research in Grade 11, we did not have any knowledge on how to do research. With that, we did not have any choice but to ask to our research adviser the necessary things in writing qualitative research."* Besides, IDI08 stressed that seeking assistance from other students has helped them cope with the challenges they encountered in writing qualitative research. They seek assistance to those sections who are advance in research, and to other fellow researchers on how to improve their work. She stated that, *"I asked from other sections who are advanced in research class on how to do qualitative research, and on how to improve our work."* Moreover, FGD09 highlighted that seeking financial assistance from families helped her cope with the challenges of writing qualitative research. The participants' responses emphasized that their families provide financial support in buying the materials needed in research such as bond papers. She uttered that, *"So the individuals that helped me in coping with the challenges that I encountered in writing research was first, my family whenever I asked money to buy for research purposes like bond paper."*

Theme 2: Doing Time Management Practices

The importance of time management is vital to accomplishing a specific goal. It is crucial especially to students who have activities, assignments, and projects from different subjects to comply. Based on the senior high school students' coping mechanisms in writing qualitative research, having time management helped them overcome the challenges they have encountered. Since writing qualitative research consumes a lot of time, students need to have a strategy to handle their time properly. Students expressed that they manage their time by avoiding procrastination, accomplishing tasks according to deadlines, and being aware of their priorities to avoid cramming. In line with this, IDI04 uttered that, *"One strategy was doing the given task immediately after it was given by the teacher instead of relaxing all the time."* Moreover, FGD09 emphasized on arranging and accomplishing the tasks according to deadlines to manage time properly. She cited that, *"We set the tasks based on deadlines and manageability to avoid overwhelming tasks."* Further, FGD08 emphasized that to have time management, it is essential to know priorities and avoid practicing cramming. She uttered that, *"The strategy we used to cope with the challenges we encountered in writing qualitative research was having time management. As a student, we must know our priorities, and avoid cramming in research."*

Theme 3: Delegating Research Tasks

Writing qualitative research is a group requirement given to senior high school students. With this, the participants divide the research tasks among the group members as an effective strategy to deal with the limited time given in writing research. Based on the participants' responses, delegating research tasks is an effective way to make the research task easy to accomplish. Specifically, the participants shared their reasons for having division of labor among the group members. FGD02 cited that, *"Among the strategies that I applied which I considered the most effective was to assign the task and its parts because it made our work easy and fast considering that we did not have ample time, and we needed to finish it because our exam was approaching."* Moreover, FGD05 stressed that the effective strategy she used was assigning the group members the research task depending on their capacity. She uttered that, *"As a leader Ma'am, the strategy that I considered the most effective was having the division of labor. I gave the easiest part to students who had the capacity to do it."* Meanwhile, senior high school students also highlighted appointing all group members to do the research task according to a given deadline as what FGD05 stated that, *"I implemented a division of labor, wherein I assigned each of them tasks. I also assigned them a deadline to comply the task because I still had to edit the paper after their submission."*

Theme 4: Utilizing Online Resources, Related Studies and Readings

Even though there were negative experiences of the senior high school students in accessing educational resources such as internet and laptop, the students still expressed that having these technological resources is vital in writing qualitative research. They expressed that utilizing internet for browsing references specifically in writing rationale, RRL, and theoretical framework, using available gadgets like laptop or tablet for typing and saving documents, and utilizing online references, and academic journals have helped them in writing qualitative research. In line with this, IDI07 expressed that, *"We used online resources in the internet in writing research most importantly in citing authors in rationale, RRL, and theoritecal framework since we did not have enough books in our school as resources for our study."* Moreover, IDI08 emphasized using available laptops, cellphone or tablet for searching online resources, typing and saving documents in writing qualitative research. She stated that, *"We used laptop and borrowed tablet in our research. It was very helpful in our research in finding online references, typing, and storing the research files."* On the other hand, IDI05 highlighted utilizing online references and academic journals related to the study. She said that, *"The resources I found most helpful in writing qualitative research in the topic entitled "The Lived Experiences of Teachers Teaching Non-Major Subjects included the academic journals, and websites with case studies similar from our studies."*

Insights of Senior High School Students in Writing Qualitative Research

Theme 1: Rationalizing Relevance of Qualitative Research through Experiences

Writing qualitative research provides a deeper awareness of people's experiences. Students expressed that one of the relevance of writing qualitative research is to spread awareness to other people about a certain issue. Also, it

provides information about how people cope with the challenges they face which becomes an avenue to develop activities to lessen the encountered problem. This has been true from the responses of the participants. IDI02 elicited that, *"Those students in lower grades will benefit in our study because it gave an awareness to them about the issue in our school. They will become sensitive about the issue."* Further, IDI07 highlighted that knowing the challenges encountered by the participants in the school can develop activities to lessen the problem. She stated that, *"Knowing the challenges in the school helped us to develop activities to lessen the problem in the school."* Seemingly, IDI09 emphasized that knowing the experiences of the participants provides information about how they cope with the challenges they faced. She cited that, *"Writing qualitative research made you become aware about the people's experiences and how they cope on that situation. You will learn how to cope in that situation if ever you will encounter the same."*

Theme 2: Developing Right Attitude in Qualitative Research Writing

Having the right attitude towards writing qualitative research is vital in accomplishing its research tasks. The senior high school students highlighted that in writing qualitative research, it is important to have patience towards the group members. Additionally, having a positive mindset and being motivated are essential to overcome the challenges in writing qualitative research. As what FGD03 specified, *"The significant learning that I have gained in writing qualitative research was having long patience in research."* Besides, IDI10 emphasized that having a positive mindset such as thinking positive towards writing qualitative research is important to make the research task become manageable. Being negative makes it difficult to accomplish the tasks. She uttered that, *"Doing research was difficult as a first-timer. It made you think negatively because of the thoughts that you will fail. This should never be your mindset. Instead, you should think positively and put in your mind that it is easy."* Further, FGD08 highlighted that being motivated in writing qualitative research is an important attitude despite of the challenges being encountered. She said that, *"No matter what problems may come in writing qualitative research, be self-motivated. You should always find a reason to view them positively."*

Theme 3: Emphasizing the Importance of Time Management

Senior high school students who are also researchers in school have multiple roles and responsibilities from other subjects which can derail productivity in research. Effective time management is necessary and allows them to become successful in writing qualitative research. This is one of the things that the participants realized during the conduct of their qualitative research. Doing the research tasks ahead of time, setting priorities, and being aware of the deadlines of submission are a must in writing qualitative research to avoid cramming. As revealed by IDI02, *"The moment that you were given the task, you should start doing it ahead of time so you will no longer cram when the defense comes."* On the other hand, FGD09 emphasized setting priorities in writing qualitative research. She stated that, *"I admit, I was not the only leader who cram. But I realized that I cannot cram*

everything and it is better to set your priorities in life." Further, FGD09 expressed that being aware of the deadline of submission is useful in managing time. She stated that, *"I believed the skills that I gained in writing qualitative research that can be applied in real world scenarios was about time management. It means being aware in time and deadlines."*

Theme 4: Developing the Students' 21st-Century Learning Skills

Research writing is one of the activities that develop the 21st-Century learning skills. Senior high school students expressed that writing qualitative research enhanced their critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills. It also builds their collaboration skills among the group members and learned the importance of communication skills in writing qualitative research. In line with this, IDI01 elicited that, *"Qualitative research is helpful to the senior high school since research is about the problem of the people. In that way, they can identify the problem and provide with solution. Thus, senior high school students' problem-solution skills will be developed."* Moreover, FGD05 stressed that writing qualitative research can build collaboration skills. She uttered that, *"The potential benefit of writing qualitative research in senior high school is that it could build collaboration with my peers."* Meanwhile, senior high school students highlighted also that in writing qualitative research, communication skills can be improve and that having good communication is vital to complete the research tasks. FGD05 cited that, *"One of the challenges that I encountered was miscommunication with my colleagues. I realized that communicating regularly is needed to follow up the designated task given to them."*

Implication for Teaching Practice

The result of the study can reflect the lived experiences of senior high school students in writing qualitative research. With all these results, these implications can be used to improve and enhance the learning strategies of senior high school students in writing qualitative research. Each of these implications will be discussed one by one.

First, the study provides senior high school teachers with a wide range of techniques and practical practices to utilize by senior high school students in writing qualitative research. Also, senior high school teachers will be able to establish effective techniques in writing qualitative research. Thus, there is a need for senior high school teachers to provide strategies to help students in senior high school write qualitative research effectively. Moreover, along with the teachers, school officials, and family members need also to provide necessary assistance to the students in writing qualitative research.

Seemingly, senior high school students will directly benefit through practicing the techniques in writing qualitative research. This study assists the students in writing qualitative research through employing effective time management, delegating the research tasks among group members, asking for assistance from teachers or other mentors, and utilizing available resources.

Moreover, the school administrators should conduct seminars about strategies to effectively write qualitative research such as mastering time management, enhancing collaboration skills, and utilizing reliable resources that can be found online. In line with this, it may lead to the development of different writing activities that may enhance their writing skills in research.

In addition, the Department of Education (DepEd) Officials should visualize specific programs that can help senior high school students be prepared in writing research. It is a must to know the experiences and challenges of the senior high school students in a certain school and to give necessary actions towards providing solutions to issues like lack of resources such as laptop and internet connection in schools.

Further, this study can be used as a reference for future research in the future studies. This can help them identify the variables associated with the topic by providing them ideas on what to focus on in their research that is related to the students' experiences in writing qualitative research.

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