



PURSUING SCHOLARLY INQUIRY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON ENGLISH MAJOR EDUCATION STUDENTS IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of English major education students in conducting research. Using a qualitative-phenomenological approach, fourteen (14) purposively sampled participants engaged in in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion. Thematic analysis was used to generate meaningful findings. The study revealed seven (7) key challenges, namely limited access to resources, difficulty balancing research with academic tasks, financial constraints, challenges in identifying and dealing with participants, lack of experience and knowledge, ineffective research instruction, and unreliable Internet access. To cope, students employed ten (10) strategies, such as seeking support from family and peers, managing time effectively, consulting research experts, collaborating with team members, staying optimistic, gathering ideas from various sources, relying on faith, organizing tasks by priority, engaging in recreational activities, and utilizing AI tools. Students also shared seven (7) insights, such as valuing collaboration, gaining confidence in public speaking, providing relevant training and seminars, improving research education quality, fostering professional and personal growth, enhancing English literacy, and strengthening critical thinking skills. The study recommends improved instructional strategies, institutional support, and policy enhancements to cultivate a more engaging research culture. Collaboration, resilience, and accessible research opportunities should be prioritized to support students in overcoming research challenges.

KEYWORDS: *Research, English Major, Education, Students, Challenges, Experiences, Coping Mechanisms, Insights, Collaboration, Support Systems, Time Management, Resourcefulness, Resilience, Personal Growth, Resources*

INTRODUCTION

The demand for research has emerged as a significant predicament among students regarding emphasis in the curriculum. The focus often leans heavily toward rote memorization and standardized testing, sidelining critical thinking, analytical writing, and research competencies. This gap leaves students ill-equipped for higher education and professional demands necessitating proficient research and writing abilities. Limited resources, language proficiency, and lack of research skills are several factors that further exacerbate the issue, hindering the capacity of students to excel in intensive writing tasks and research endeavors.

In Saudi Arabia, Ali and Zayid (2022) found that most students struggle with doing research tasks due to difficulty in writing in English as a second language, deciding the right topic, and lacking motivation, time, guidance, and supervision. Moreover, in Vietnam, Ngoc and Ngoc (2021) presented that students encounter similar issues in identifying the topic, citing correctly, interpreting data clearly, and discussing findings. Also, in Indonesia, Sukandi and Rianita (2020) stated that students struggled with finding sources, developing ideas, analyzing data,

organizing discussions, and writing with correct grammar, and this is largely influenced by their perception of research writing.

In the Philippines, a study by Pangket et al. (2023) indicated that most students struggle to master the skills expected to write research. The reason for this problem is that these students lack knowledge of the research fundamentals and skills. Correspondingly, Lobo (2023) explored the challenges students faced completing their research and found out that they experienced problems with limited facilities, time management, communication with the research supervisor, Internet connectivity, and data gathering impediments.

In Davao de Oro, higher education institutions are actively engaged in research. Students create research papers that shed light on relevant educational concerns. Nevertheless, Briz et al. (2022) noted that most students struggled due to lack of knowledge, difficulties with instructors, limited materials and resources, lack of interest from research participants, and English language-related ineptness. Likewise, based on observation, most students see research work as a mere requirement or compliance to finish the degree. These issues hinder students' progress in contributing meaningfully to scholarly discourse.



In connection, similar studies have been found concerning the phenomenon of conducting research. However, most of these studies focus mainly on the experiences of teachers. For instance, the study of Tingabngab and Binayoa (2023) examines issues that public elementary school teachers encounter when conducting research including struggle in the early stages, feelings of rejection, complexity of expectations, and inadequate skills in data analysis. Also, the study of Landicho (2020) emphasized investigating educators' attitudes, motivations, and challenges in conducting research.

Hence, further inquiry is needed on the experiences of college students, specifically English major education students from various colleges in Davao de Oro, in conducting research through a qualitative-phenomenological study. All the mentioned contexts urged the researcher to consider this study to address this unresolved and serious problem that most students are experiencing today. Understanding the experiences of the students as they engage in this endeavor is essential in improving the quality and enhancement of education programs and fostering a community of informed, innovative, and research-oriented educators.

Moreover, the experiences of the participants may offer recommendations and implications for managing the tasks required in conducting research. Research is indispensable for education students and the broader education sector for it can empower students with essential skills and knowledge, inform educational practices and policies, and enhance learning outcomes. Further, the results of the study can be disclosed to stakeholders for information and implementation through seminars, learning action cell sessions, research symposia and conferences, and international publications.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative-phenomenological study was to explore and understand the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of English major education students in conducting research. The locale of this study was various local and state colleges in Davao de Oro.

At this stage in the research, the experiences of the students in conducting research were generally defined as the concerns and needs of the practices that the students faced in developing skills in doing the overall research process.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of English major education students in conducting research?
2. How do English major education students cope with the challenges of conducting research?
3. What are the insights of English major education students in conducting research?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of English major education students in conducting research. Qualitative research, as described by Creswell and Geutterman (2019), seeks to understand a phenomenon in its natural setting through in-depth exploration and participants' perspectives. Phenomenology, as stated by Farrell (2020), focuses on individuals' lived experiences, uncovering the essence and underlying meanings of a phenomenon. This approach is well-suited for the study as it allows a deep investigation into students' research experiences while ensuring their voices are accurately represented. The qualitative-phenomenological design is flexible and adaptive and emphasizes context, enabling the researcher to analyze and interpret participants' thoughts and insights comprehensively.

Research Participants

The participants of the study are the selected fourteen (14) BSEd-English students from local (LUC) and state colleges (SUC) in Davao de Oro. Among them, seven (7) participated in in-depth interviews (IDI), while the remaining seven (7) took part in a focus group discussion (FGD).

Moreover, purposive sampling was implemented to identify the participants fairly. The participants were selected through the following inclusion criteria: (a) must be a BSEd-English student; (b) must be from a local college (LUC) or state college (SUC) within Davao de Oro; (c) must be enrolled in any research courses; and (d) must be done with conducting research.

Data Analysis

Creswell and Poth (2016) stated that data analysis in qualitative research comprises organizing data for analysis, thoroughly reading the data, making broad interpretations, condensing the codes to reduce the data into themes, and then presenting the findings in the discussion. Data analysis commenced after transcribing data gathered from in-depth interviews (IDI) and focus group discussion (FGD). In formulating the major themes and core ideas relevant to the study, the study employed thematic analysis following the six-step framework of Braun and Clarke (2014), as referenced by Mihas (2023).

The researcher first immersed in the data by transcribing, reading, and analyzing underlying meanings. Initial codes were systematically generated by reviewing transcripts and identifying significant data points. These codes were then categorized into coherent themes using tables, mind maps, or theme clusters. Preliminary themes were reviewed and refined to ensure accuracy and alignment with the data. Finally, the researcher presented a structured discussion of findings, incorporating illustrative excerpts and relevant citations. To enhance reliability, the researcher sought validation from a data analyst, ensuring the accuracy and quality of the analysis while strengthening the findings.



RESULTS

Experiences of English Major Education Students in Conducting Research

Table 1 presents the major themes and core ideas that convey the experiences of English major education students in conducting research. In total, seven (7) essential themes emerged: (a) experiencing difficulty due to limited access to related studies and

resources, (b) struggling to balance research with other academic tasks, (c) experiencing financial constraints, (d) having difficulty in identifying and dealing with research participants, (e) experiencing difficulty due to lack of experience and knowledge, (f) having difficulty due to lack of effective instruction in research methods, and (g) struggling to have access to a reliable internet connection.

Table 1

Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Experiences of English Major Education Students in Conducting Research

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Experiencing Difficulty due to Limited Access to Related Studies and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deterring research tasks due to limited resources or tools • gathering sufficient research corpora is hindered • searching relevant references is difficult for semiotic analysis on PowerPoint presentations • evaluating and selecting relevant and reliable studies • finding reliable sources for a unique research topic is difficult • struggling to find materials that meet the research requirements • struggling with the scarcity of literature on semiotic analysis • finding relevant and recent literature within the required five-year timeframe
Struggling to Balance Research with Other Academic Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • managing research alongside other subjects • balancing research with rigorous third-year subjects • struggling to prioritize doing research or studying for exams • struggling to do research revisions amidst tight deadlines • competing priorities in research and other academic requirements • managing multiple academic demands effectively
Experiencing Financial Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • managing budget and expenses throughout the research process • having financial problems • being financially prepared due to research costs • planning carefully and managing costs due to financial constraints in research • managing research independently and handling financial burdens • budgeting money to overcome financial challenges during research
Having Difficulty in Identifying and Dealing with Research Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recruiting participants and ensuring their engagement by choosing a relatable research topic • identifying suitable participants but struggling to engage with them • managing participant withdrawal and giving respect for voluntary participation • struggling to conduct research due to limited willing participants • managing participants and gathering data professionally
Experiencing Difficulty due to Lack of Experience and Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducting research due to a lack of prior experience is a struggle • lacking research process knowledge of team members • conducting research is difficult due to unfamiliarity with the research design • doing data analysis is difficult due to lack of method knowledge
Having Difficulty due to Lack of Effective Instruction in Research Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • struggling with unclear instruction due to ineffective teaching of research concepts • engaging in self-directed learning due to lack of instruction • navigating the research process independently due to a lack of effective instruction and a busy adviser • struggling with insufficient or unclear instruction
Struggling to Have Access to a Reliable Internet Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being frustrated due to limited access to relevant sources the Internet provides • struggling to find sources due to slow Internet and time-consuming access • hindering research progress due to unreliable Internet connection



Coping Mechanisms of English Major Education Students in Conducting Research

Table 2 presents the major themes and core ideas that convey the coping mechanisms of English major education students in conducting research. In total, ten (10) essential themes emerged: (a) receiving guidance and support from family and peers, (b) managing time effectively and planning the tasks accordingly, (c)

seeking guidance from research experts, (d) collaborating with team members, (e) remaining optimistic despite challenges, (f) collecting ideas from varied sources, (g) seeking God's providence, (h) organizing tasks from the most important to the least important, (i) engaging in recreational activities, and (j) maximizing the use of AI apps.

Table 2

Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Coping Mechanisms of English Major Education Students in Conducting Research

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Receiving Guidance and Support from Family and Peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> receiving support from family and friends is crucial spending quality time bonding with family and friends to take a break from research venting to a supportive listener offers relief and guidance receiving support from friends and classmates helps overcome research challenges having support systems provides motivation and guidance having support systems, especially from friends and co-researchers, boosts the morale having familial support provides strength and motivation
Managing Time Effectively and Planning the Tasks Accordingly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> planning and organizing from the beginning planning continuously to address evolving research tasks implementing effective time management strategies to cope with research challenges planning and avoiding procrastination to balance academic and other responsibilities creating a detailed plan and breaking tasks into smaller parts to handle the research process managing time effectively to balance research with other academic responsibilities and tasks managing time helps balance rest and productivity
Seeking Guidance from Research Experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> asking for advice and feedback provides motivation and new perspectives to improve research following suggestions and corrections of advisers and panelists being guided and supported by the research instructor seeking guidance from advisers and experienced teachers to overcome challenges and improve research quality asking questions from individuals who are knowledgeable about research consulting experts to obtain accurate and comprehensive research information
Collaborating with Team Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dividing tasks and swapping roles to balance research and other subjects delegating tasks and compiling them later to streamline the research process assigning tasks to ensure teamwork and productivity collaborating as a team and dividing tasks dividing tasks efficiently to ensure research quality
Remaining Optimistic despite Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> having a determined mindset and a strong desire to embrace research having a positive mindset, self-belief, and trust in one's team to persist through research viewing failures as learning opportunities for improvement and growth in research doing self-motivation and positive affirmations to cope with research pressures having a growth mindset and being optimistic in turning challenges into opportunities in research
Collecting Ideas from Varied Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> utilizing external resources and expert recommendations to gather relevant information using library resources and the Internet provides guidance and reference for research exploring diverse sources to actively search for relevant research materials accessing diverse platforms beyond academic databases



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> utilizing various resources to overcome library limitations and gather relevant information
Seeking God's Providence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> meditating on the Scripture and offering a prayer praying complemented with diligent effort and responsible action having faith in God, praying, and encouraging oneself entrusting challenges and uncertainties to God through prayer trusting in God's providence and viewing failures as part of His greater plan
Organizing Tasks from the Most Important to the Least Important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> following an organized workflow organizing through a structured schedule and focusing on specific tasks within set timeframes prioritizing tasks and creating a schedule organizing through checklists and working steadily based on priorities using reminders and prioritizing tasks from easiest to most challenging
Engaging in Recreational Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> incorporating self-care, mindful breaks, and personal motivation incorporating self-care, relaxation activities, and celebrating progress in research balancing work and relaxation by using hobbies, social interaction, and support systems engaging in creative activities like painting offers an emotional outlet incorporating joyful activities, social support, and breaks
Maximizing the Use of AI Apps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using online databases and AI tools to access research articles utilizing AI tools like grammar checkers and citation finders leveraging AI tools and online resources using AI tools to enhance efficiency and leveraging technology for effective solutions

Insights of English Major Education Students in Conducting Research

Table 3 presents the major themes and core ideas that convey the insights of English major education students in conducting research. In total, seven (7) essential themes emerged: (a) appreciate the essence of collaboration in research, (b) develop

confidence in speaking in front of an audience, (c) provide relevant seminars, training, and workshops, (d) improve the quality of research education, (e) foster professional and personal growth, (f) develop English literacy skills, and (g) enhance critical thinking skills.

Table 3
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights of English Major Education Students in Conducting Research

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Appreciate the Essence of Collaboration in Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensures the realization of research through collaboration ensures equal contribution of members feels grateful for collaborative teamwork in research enhances research by providing guidance, sharing ideas, and easing the workload leads to successful research fosters diverse ideas, provides emotional support, and ensures shared responsibility fosters openness to new ideas refines the study and ensures its quality through guidance from advisers, panelists, and peers
Develop Confidence in Speaking in front of an Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fosters clarity in explaining ideas and builds confidence in delivery and defense requires effective engagement and presentation at various stages teaches how to convey ideas with organization and confidence requires clear articulation of complex ideas and confidence in presenting to various audience provides opportunities to articulate ideas clearly and present findings effectively requires clear explanations and responses to panel questions



Provide Relevant Seminars, Training, and Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide training programs or seminars on research to equip students • organize department-led initiatives like seminars or training • organize a symposium on research for all programs • implement hands-on practical research workshops along with mentorship programs • develop a comprehensive capability-building program including seminar-workshops led by expert speakers • provide training for teachers
Improve the Quality of Research Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • integrate research into the curriculum from the first year for advanced preparation • enhance the curriculum with practical applications of research skills • assign knowledgeable instructors and advisers and provide clear guidelines and resources • invest in reliable and accessible research resources and tools • promote greater flexibility in research topic selection • align research topics with current real-life issues
Foster Professional and Personal Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • builds lasting knowledge valuable for future teaching • fosters growth, confidence, and professional development, and future opportunities • enhances understanding and creates effective teaching materials • deepens understanding of English education and reinforces commitment to evidence-based teaching • fosters the ability to understand diverse learning needs and innovation
Develop English Literacy Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reveals the transformative power of language in shaping thoughts, behaviors, and society • deepens understanding of meaning-making through symbols and contexts • explores symbols and signs to deepen English understanding • deepens understanding of English through communication and continuous learning • understands language evolution, particularly on social media, to enhance English engagement
Enhance Critical Thinking Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhances critical thinking, analytical skills, and practical experience, supporting effective teaching and curriculum development in English education • fosters critical thinking and helps present ideas clearly and concisely • sharpens critical thinking and analytical skills, enhancing the ability to evaluate information and apply it effectively in teaching

DISCUSSIONS

Implications for Teaching Practice

The findings of the study may be essential to students as they provide valuable coping mechanisms to support their research journey. Students can seek help from family, peers, and instructors, engage in collaborative teamwork, practice effective time management, explore diverse research resources, and maintain faith through prayer. Additionally, the study serves as a useful reference, guiding students in navigating research challenges with commitment and dedication, ultimately fostering resilience and a stronger research mindset.

The findings of this study may benefit teachers by enhancing their instructional support through the development of effective teaching strategies for research. By fostering strong mentor-mentee relationships, teachers can encourage student engagement and motivation in research activities. Additionally, organizing

small-scale seminars and workshops can help refine students' research skills, while providing follow-ups and guidance ensures sustained support throughout the research process.

The findings of the study may help school heads and administrators enhance research education by organizing research-related seminars, training programs, and workshops. Improving access to academic resources, such as research hubs, journal subscriptions, and better internet connectivity, can further support students. Additionally, assigning well-trained research mentors and adjusting workloads can strengthen student guidance, while financial aid, scholarships, or research grants may help alleviate financial constraints. Lastly, conducting curriculum reviews ensures that research education aligns with academic standards and best practices, fostering a more effective research culture in academic institutions.



Recommendations for Future Research

This study successfully explored the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of English major education students in conducting research within local and state colleges in Davao de Oro. The essential themes identified provide significant insights into the challenges and strategies students employ. However, the study does not claim to be a definitive exploration of the topic, as its findings are based on the perspectives of only 14 participants. Given this limitation, the study serves as a descriptive rather than a generalizable account, highlighting the need for further research in this area.

Future researchers are encouraged to replicate or expand upon this study by adopting different methodologies, including quantitative and mixed methods, to provide deeper insights. Expanding the participant pool and conducting research across multiple sites could enhance the reliability of findings. Additionally, future studies could focus on evaluating students' research outputs, attitudes toward research, the effectiveness of research instruction, and the role of AI in research. Such research could contribute to improving research education and fostering a stronger research culture in academic institutions.

Concluding Remarks

The study highlights the significant experiences faced by English major education students in conducting research, including limited access to resources, lack of experience and guidance, financial constraints, and the difficulty of balancing research with other academic responsibilities. These struggles emphasize the need for improved research support and instruction to enhance the research experience and the quality of outputs. By shedding light on these issues, this study contributes to the broader discourse on research education and pedagogy, advocating for reforms to better equip students in their scholarly pursuits.

As a researcher, the journey of conducting this study has been deeply personal and transformative. The experiences shared by the participants resonated strongly with my own, from my college years to my current pursuit of a master's degree. This research has been more than an academic endeavor—it has been an opportunity to find solidarity with other researchers and gain a renewed sense of purpose, further shaping my approach as an educator.

Beyond its academic contributions, this study has been a profound learning experience, instilling in me patience, endurance, and perseverance. In gratitude for the lessons gained, I hope this work sparks positive changes in how students experience research. It is my earnest wish that everyone will take meaningful steps to address student researchers' challenges through training programs, better resource allocation, and enhanced research support systems. Ultimately, I hope this study serves as a source of guidance and inspiration for those who embark on their research journey.

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