Research Article

Pagtimakas: The Success Stories Of Self-Supporting Students In Capiz State University – Tapaz Satellite College

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study explored on *Pagtimakas*: The Success Stories of Self-supporting Students in Capiz State University (CapSU) – Tapaz Satellite College, Tapaz, Capiz, Philippines. Using the qualitative research design, five (5) informants were purposively chosen. Fieldwork, observations, key informant interviews, and documentary and photographic analysis were the methods used. Verbatim data transcripts were analyzed using the general inductive approach by Thomas (2006) in Berondo (2023). Emerging concepts were then arranged thematically. This study aimed to analyze the success stories of self-supporting students who have now graduated from CapSU – Tapaz Satellite College, Tapaz, Capiz, Philippines, to describe the themes based on the narratives of the students, to determine the challenges they have encountered to reach their goals, to be inspired of how they conquered those challenges and to read their wise words that they wish to impart to the younger generation and currently struggling students of CAPSU – Tapaz Satellite Campus, Tapaz, Capiz, Philippines. The results of the study showed that the respondents have encountered concentration woes, high pressure, compromised school work, lack of time for self-care, for family, for school work and for friends, and burn out working for family while juggling responsibilities at school. The study has also showed that they have applied perseverance, visualization, proper pacing and being mindful to overcome the struggles that they have had. The tips that they can impart are to keep a journal and practice visualization, perseverance and full surrender to the Lord.
	Keywords: challenges, poverty, societal issues, struggles, study, victories

Introduction

In an essay by Yadav (2021), she has written that Nelson Mandela is very right when he uttered the words that "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." It might not be the truth to everyone but to a poor country with illiterate citizens, education is the best solution to their troubles and problems. Even in a third world country where everyone's value is determined by income, having a quality education would ensure them a steady source of it.

This is true with the life story from Quinones (2020) where she testified that Education pulled her and her family out of the cycle of poverty. She was told at a young age that Education is the key to success. "The higher the education you would get, the higher the pay you would receive and the better life you would live" is one of the repeated mantras her mother would tell her. She had experienced horrible things to get where she is now, a successful English Teacher in Japan and world speaker who has travelled in many places. She was once living in poverty with her family staying in a crime-ridden neighbourhood and attending schools with crumbling infrastructures. But she pursued her studies and applied for better opportunities and struggled to land where she is now.

In the Philippines, there are so many success stories among the students that you can encounter. Despite the report by Cecilia (2022) that learning loss was worse among poor children than among richer ones, students of poor backgrounds are striving and succeeding to overcome their many struggles in life. Many agencies are helping them succeed in their schooling and scholarship grants are being given to deserving students. A total of 10,487 students are set to enter college in academic year 2022-2023 as new science scholars as the Department of Science and Technology - Science Education Institute (DOST-SEI) released the official list of names of the scholarship qualifiers (DOST-SEI, 2022).

Despite having scholarships and grants from the government and private individuals, Filipino students are still challenged to support themselves because of their financial problems. According to The Freeman (2016), the job options of Filipino working students are, namely online jobs, paid corporate internship, fast-food crew, and school jobs. Filipino students are struggling because they have to meet the standards in their part time work so they will not lose their job and at the same time maintain high academic performance so that they will not get a failing grade. Based on the ABSCBN News (2010), around 216,000 understudies in the Philippines are right now juggling school and work. About 8% out of the total number of college students in the Philippines is a working student. According to Commission on Higher Education (CHED) written on the same report from ABSCBN News, only half of the employed students can finish college, as many cannot concentrate on their studies, while others have poor health, and other give up because of financial problem.

Tumin et al. (2020) mentioned that working while studying as financial support and self-improvement revealed several challenges related to time constraints, pressures, and engagement to their studies. Despite the challenges, working students considered these to develop and acquire the necessary skills for better future employment. In addition, according to Eng et. al. (2019), the concept of working while studying is meaningful enough to be perceived that one can earn to support their necessities, such as school fees, family budgets, and the likes while pursuing higher education. It can help to minimize financial stressors and is an effective method of self-improvement. Also, based on Pregoner et al. (2020), budgetary needs, necessities, and help in future goals are other reasons why working students are part-time employed.

The purpose of this study is to examine the success stories of self-supporting students who have now graduated from CapSU – Tapaz Satellite College, Tapaz, Capiz, Philippines despite the many blockages to their aspirations and struggles that are surmounting and that they seem to cannot overcome when they were studying but they have surpassed now. Their stories and narratives will then serve as inspiration to the current students who are facing likewise.

The study generally aimed to document and to analyze the success stories of self-supporting students who have now graduated from CapSU – Tapaz Satellite College, Tapaz, Capiz, Philippines. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:
1. What are the challenges that were encountered by the respondents to graduate from their studies?
2. How were the respondents able to conquer those challenges to reach their goals?
3. What wise words can the respondents impart to the younger and currently struggling students?

Materials and Methods or Methodology
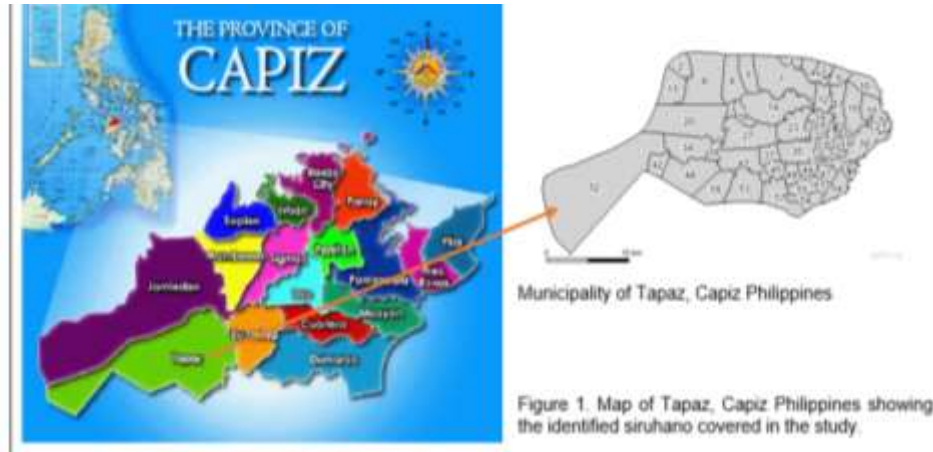
Methodology
This study utilized a qualitative research methodology in understanding and analyzing the success stories of self-supporting students who have now graduated from CapSU – Tapaz Satellite College, Tapaz, Capiz, Philippines. Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research (Bhandari, 2020) as cited in Berondo (2023). Specifically, this study used qualitative narrative research design which aimed to explore and conceptualize human experience as it is represented in textual form. Aiming for an in-depth exploration of the meanings people assign to their experiences, a narrative researcher works with small samples of participants to obtain rich and free-ranging discourse. The emphasis is on storied experience. Generally, this takes the form of interviewing people around the topic of interest, but it might also involve the analysis of written documents. The researcher becomes the interpreter of the individual's stories, as opposed to a community.

Participants
Purposive sampling was used to identify the five (5) key informants of the study. This sampling technique refers to a type of non-probability sampling where the target participants meet specific practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, availability at the given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the study (Etikan et al., 2016). The selection criteria for the participants were the following: (a) previously enrolled in CapSU – Tapaz Satellite College, (b) must be a self-supporting student when enrolled in CapSU – Tapaz Satellite College, and (c) someone who successfully graduated from CapSU – Tapaz Satellite College.

Locale of Study

The study was conducted at Capiz State University (CapSU) – Tapaz Satellite College, Tapaz, Capiz, Philippines. Tapaz is a landlocked municipality in the coastal province of Capiz with fifty-eight (58) baranggays. The municipality has a land area of 517.18 square kilometers which constitutes 19.93% of Capiz's total area. Its population as determined by the 2020 Census was 54,423. This represented 6.76% of the total population of Capiz province, or 0.68% of the overall population of the Western Visayas region (PhilAtlas, 2023).

Figure 1. Map of Tapaz, Capiz Philippines showing the identified siruhano covered in the study.

Data Collection

Fieldwork, observations, key informant interviews, and documentary and photographic analysis were used to gather data. These methods substantiate and triangulate the data elicited from the informants. For ethical considerations, necessary permits and disclosure information were secured from the informants prior to the conduct of the study.

Data Analysis

Data gathered through key informant interviews were transcribed verbatim. To make sense of the data transcripts, the general inductive approach by Thomas (2006) in Berondo (2023) was used. Emerging concepts were then arranged thematically.

This qualitative study utilized thematic analysis to interpret its findings. It focused on the important questions, topics, time periods, and events of the experiences of everyone. Through the process of horizontalization, all statements that were relevant to the participant's experience were listed, and each comment was considered to hold equal value.

The findings were then interpreted and categorized accordingly into codes, which were all held verbatim. This was done by going through all interview transcriptions and labeling words, phrases, and sections of text that were related to the research questions of interest. Then, the codes were grouped into themes that aided the authors in answering each research question, enabling the researcher to formulate the essences of the experiences of the participants, both individually and as a whole. All of these were manually done, without the use of any qualitative software tool.

Results and Discussions

Results

Basic themes from the codes were developed and organized into five (5) categories that eventually led to three (3) themes. The fifteen (15) statements from the five (5) respondents gave way to eleven (11) codes that were grouped into five (5) categories that were further arranged into three (3) organizing themes paving the way to the central idea of the study which is understanding and analyzing the success stories of self-supporting students who have now graduated from CapSU – Tapaz Satellite College, Tapaz, Capiz, Philippines (Table 1).

Table 1. Thematic Analysis of the study

	Statement	Coding	Category	Theme
1.	Hard to concentrate at school because of lack of sleep and rest	Concentration woes	Academic adversities	Challenges
2.	There is high pressure because you have to juggle many responsibilities at home, at work and at school	High Pressure	Academic adversities	Challenges
3.	School works are compromised because of work commitments	Compromised school work	Academic adversities	Challenges
4.	Losing the time to care for yourself because of thinking more how to provide for your family while performing well at school to not fail them	Lack of time	Familial adversities	Challenges
5.	Making night time as day time to keep on working because free tuition is not enough and you have to pay for your projects and allowances and also for the needs of your family who are even relying on you	Working for family	Familial adversities	Challenges
6.	Lacking the time to eat and sleep since after school, I have to report to work which lasts until midnight	Lack of time	Personal adversities	Challenges
7.	To excel at school, I have to sacrifice my time socializing with friends and family and instead would focus on doing assignments and work related stuffs	Lack of time	Personal adversities	Challenges
8.	Perseverance is the key and not giving up despite the deprived food and sleep	Perseverance	Winning attitude	Victories
9.	Keeping a picture of my family and dreams in life made me endure all the struggles I had	Visualization	Winning attitude	Victories
10.	Taking each day one step at a time and not failing to ask the help of the Lord	Proper pacing	Winning attitude	Victories
11.	Being mindful of what I want in life made me overcome all the challenges I had to go through	Being mindful	Winning attitude	Victories
12.	Write down your goals and be determined to achieve them	Journaling	Admirable trait	Tips
13.	Visualize where you want to go in life and work your way in to it	Visualization	Admirable trait	Tips
14.	Hold on and do not ever give up, all things shall pass	Perseverance	Admirable trait	Tips
15.	How heavy and hard your burdens are, trust and surrender everything to the Lord and He will help you overcome them	Full surrender	Admirable trait	Tips

Challenges encountered by the self-supporting students

Self-supporting students, often referred to as financially independent or self-sustaining students, face a unique set of challenges compared to their peers who have financial support from family or other sources. These challenges can significantly impact their educational experience and overall well-being. When the respondents of this study were asked what challenges they have encountered while studying, their answers varied. These range from academic struggles, troubles with their families and personal struggles.

One respondent answered that she is having a hard time to "concentrate at school because of lack of sleep and rest" while another responded that "there is high pressure because you have to juggle many responsibilities at home, at work and at school", which rings true to all of them because of the added responsibility to fend off for themselves.

One heartbreaking response says, "school works are compromised because of work commitments". This is the most common result of having to support oneself because of dire situations. Constraints from all aspects of life are emphasized and important things are compromised.

Another answer by the respondents was about "losing the time to care for yourself because of thinking more about how to provide for your family while performing well at school to not fail them" gives one an idea of how hard their lives must be.

It was seconded by another response that says, "making nighttime as daytime to keep on working because free tuition is not enough, and you have to pay for your projects and allowances and also for the needs of your family who are even relying on you".

Another heartbreaking answer from a passionate self-supporting student goes like this, "lacking the time to eat and sleep since after school, I have to report to work which lasts until midnight." This opens the eyes of the researcher to the great hurdles and challenges the respondents have undergone.

Lastly, another respondent shared that "to excel at school, I have to sacrifice my time socializing with friends and family and instead would focus on doing assignments and work-related stuffs."

Reasons for victories of the self-supporting students

The victories of self-supporting students can be attributed to a combination of various factors such as personal attributes, skills, and experiences that arise from the unique challenges they face. Their ability to navigate these challenges contributes not only to their academic success but also to the development of valuable life skills. When asked regarding the reasons for their victories, the respondents have common answers, and these can be congested into 4 statements. These answers went like this:

Two passionate respondents shared the same sentiments about "perseverance is the key and not giving up despite the deprived food and sleep".

Another answer that goes like this, "keeping a picture of my family and dreams in life made me endure all the struggles I had" makes one tear up and realize what power of visualization can bring to us.

The response which garnered unanimous decision is "taking each day one step at a time and not failing to ask the help of the Lord" reminds one of the winning attitudes of Christian community.

To finish, the response, "being mindful of what I want in life made me overcome all the challenges I had to go through" reminds one the spirit and grit needed to surpass all the hurdles and challenges we are facing.

Tips by the graduated self-supporting students to younger and currently struggling students

Embarking on the journey of higher education is a transformative experience, filled with challenges and triumphs. For many students, the path is not only about academic pursuits but also about navigating the complexities of financial independence. Graduated, self-supporting students, who have successfully balanced the demands of academia and financial responsibilities, have invaluable insights to share with those currently treading a similar path. When asked, the respondents shared four common life advice to the younger and currently struggling students.

Two respondents shared that they must "write down your goals and be determined to achieve them". This is supported by the book Visualfestation by Peter Adams (2012). Also, the tip about, "visualize where you want to go in life and work your way in to it" goes with it. That is why, the now graduated students achieved their victories because they were intentional and determined to get them.

Another tip shared by the respondents goes like this, "Hold on and do not ever give up, all things shall pass" reminds one of one of the constants in life which is change and that is why, one must hold on and let the tide change so they will see the beauty of their sacrifice.

Lastly, the respondents imparted on a relaxing note that "how heavy and hard your burdens are, trust and surrender everything to the Lord and He will help you overcome them" highlight the importance of one's faith and relationship with their Maker and King. This reminder gave power to the respondents and they hope to impart and share that power to the younger and currently struggling students as well.

DISCUSSIONS

This study aimed to document and analyze the success stories of self-supporting students who have now graduated from CapSU – Tapaz Satellite College, Tapaz, Capiz, Philippines, to describe the themes based on the narratives of the students, to determine the challenges they have encountered to reach their goals, to be inspired of how they conquered those challenges and to read their wise words that they wish to impart to the younger generation and currently struggling students of CapSu – Tapaz Satellite Campus, Tapaz, Capiz, Philippines.

The results of the study showed that the students have encountered concentration woes, high pressure, compromised school work, lack of time for self-care, for family, for school work and for friends, and burn out working for family while juggling responsibilities at school. This is similar to the studies by Tumin et al. (2020) that mentioned that working while studying as financial support and self-improvement revealed several challenges related to time constraints, pressures, and engagement to their studies. Despite the challenges, working students considered these to develop and acquire the necessary skills for better future employment. In addition, according to Eng et. al. (2019), the concept of working while studying is meaningful enough to be perceived that one can earn to support their necessities, such as school fees, family budgets, and the like while pursuing higher education. It can help to minimize financial stressors and an effective method of self-improvement. Also, based on Pregoner et al. (2020), budgetary needs, necessities, and help in future goals are other reasons why working students are part-time employed.

The study has also shown that they have applied perseverance, visualization, proper pacing and mindfulness to overcome the struggles that they have had. Working students who decide to work while studying must be, first, committed, and disciplined. Detrimental results typically arise because hours spent at work take time away from studying, leading to lower grades and less attractive post-college opportunities (Abenoja et al., 2020). In the study of Zhang et al. (2019), findings include both positive and negative relationships between employment and academic performance. Working students are at difficulty due to the increasing outside workloads they carry while attaining academic achievements, which results in an adversarial relationship (Pusztai & Kocsis, 2019). If they are confident in balancing their work and student capabilities, the relationship between working and academic performance might not be a problem for a working student if they need to be mindful of both the course load and workload they require to accomplish (Zhang et al. 2019).

The tips that these self-supporting students turned successful graduates can impart to the younger generation and struggling students are to keep a journal and practice visualization, perseverance and full surrender to the Lord.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We all believe in the importance and power of education. We value it well and we would like everyone within our scope to attain a high-quality education so that their lives will be improved and enriched. However, it is a sad reality of life that education is not always accessible for all. Some must strive harder to attain it despite the many scholarships and grants being afforded to them. Just like the five (5) informants, many students are self-supporting but have risen from poverty because they have successfully achieved a higher quality education. The respondents have shown us that their struggles are not easy. They have encountered concentration woes, high pressure, compromised school work, lack of time for self-care, for family, for school

work and for friends and burn out working for family while juggling responsibilities at school. And yet, despite of that, they have successfully graduated because of their practices of having perseverance, visualization, proper pacing and being mindful to overcome the struggles that they have had. The road to greatness is not an easy one but they admonish the younger generation and likewise struggling students to continue on and pursue all their dreams and wants in life by keeping a journal to strengthen their whys, by practicing visualization to strengthen their resolve, by being persevering and never giving up and having a full surrender to God for He will always help overcome the struggles that they are facing.

It is hereby recommended that the educational sector though wanting to uphold a quality education be more understanding of the situation of these individuals who are self-supporting to not add additional stress and pressure on them and cause detrimental effects on their well-being. Students must also be greatly admonished to be stronger than the battles that they are facing in life. Many are their struggles, but they must be mindful of the brighter future ahead of them. The tips and stories from the successful student-graduates must also serve as an inspiration for them to aim high in their studies and to aspire greater than what they currently are. Just like the stories, they too can move beyond poverty and raise their family.

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