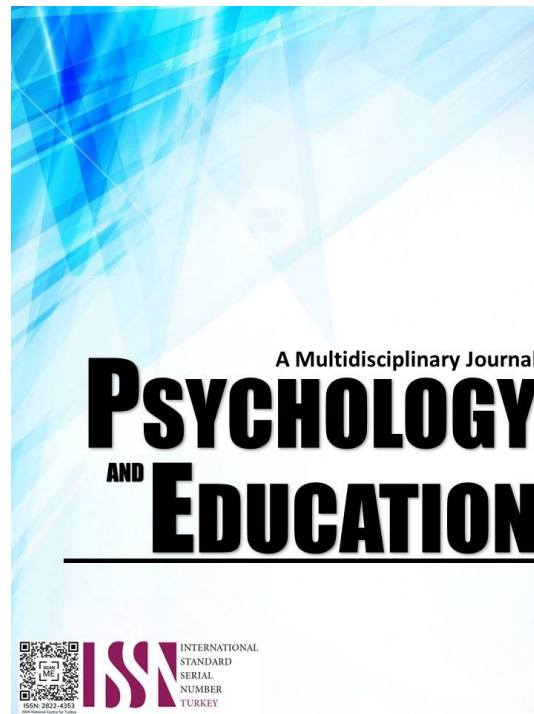


# **THE LIVED EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY INDIGENOUS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AMIDST THE NEW NORMAL OF EDUCATION**



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## The Lived Experiences and Challenges Faced by Indigenous High School Students Amidst the New Normal of Education

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### Abstract

Indigenous people (IP) have faced multiple difficulties in education. Indigenous students often do worse academically than non-indigenous student peers. These stated the low enrollment rates showed a dropout rate, absenteeism, repetition rates, literacy rate, and thus the educational outcomes, with retention and completion being two significant issues. Further, this study explores the lived experiences and challenges faced by indigenous high school students amidst the new normal education. Employing the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the findings of this study were: (1) The reason why IP learners were not satisfied with their performance is that they cannot understand some of the lessons due to the language barrier. (2) IP learners are committed to finishing their studies, however, some of the students lack resources for studying, like gadgets for researching, and they do not have cell phones. And the other students may have gadgets or cellphones, but their internet connection is low or not accessible in some places at their location.

**Keywords:** *Philippines, challenges, lived experiences, new normal of education, indigenous learners*

### Introduction

The Philippines' indigenous peoples (IP) have preserved much of their pre-colonial culture, social institutions, and livelihood practices. They generally live in geographically isolated areas with limited access to basic social services and few opportunities for mainstream economic activities, education, or political participation. According to the 2015 population census, the country's Indigenous population continues to be estimated at between 10% to 20% of the national population of 100,981,437 (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2021).

Constitution 1987 Article XIV Sec 1 stated, "The State is responsible for defending and advancing every citizen's right to high-quality education at all levels and for taking the necessary actions to ensure that everyone has access to it. Thus, "The State shall recognize, respect, and protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities to maintain and advance their traditions, institutions, and cultures, according to Section 17 of the Constitution. It will consider these rights when creating national plans and programs. In addition, Section 30 states that "The State shall ensure that the ICCs/IPs have equal access to the various cultural opportunities through the educational system, public or cultural entities, scholarships, grants, and other incentives, without prejudice to their right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions, by providing education in their language, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of

teaching and learning. Native children and kids have a right to receive public education at all levels and in all formats."

However, the United Nations (UN, 2017) stated that IP and nomadic people have faced multiple difficulties in education. Indigenous students often do worse academically than non-indigenous student peers. These stated the low enrollment rates showed a dropout rate, absenteeism, repetition rates, literacy rate, and thus the educational outcomes, with retention and completion being two significant issues.

According to the Indigenous Peoples Education Office of the Department of Education (2021), throughout the first ten years of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program, 2.529 million IP students were served in 42,176 public schools throughout the Philippines (IPsEO). IPEd is DepEd's response to indigenous communities and indigenous learners' entitlement to a contextually appropriate education. In a DepEd Teaches episode, Senior Technical Assistant and IPsEO Head Maria Lourie Victor explained how it respects their identities and values and promotes their knowledge systems, skills, and values in addition to the other aspects of their history. Some ongoing initiatives for IP learners to experience culture-responsive education include the contextualization of lesson plans, the use of the local language for instruction, elders serving as teachers and mentors, using the ancestral domain as a classroom, establishing IPEd Senior High School, hiring more teachers who are knowledgeable about the subject matter, and providing more instruction.

Reedy 2019, stated that access to technology has been a persistent problem that limits the ability to access and participate in the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Despite this, especially in remote areas, Islander people have embraced the use of digital technologies in a variety of educational contexts.

Moreover, this study aims to explore the lived experiences and challenges faced by indigenous students' amidst the new normal of education. Also to understand the difference of the society and lifestyle among the educational access of the indigenous high school students reducing and recognizing the discrimination faced by the students and ensuring the economical, social and political participation as the citizens of their states and communities.

### Research Questions

This study aims to explore the lived experiences and challenges faced by indigenous high school students amidst the new normal education. Specifically, this sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of indigenous high school students amidst the new normal of education?
2. What are the challenges faced by indigenous high school students amidst the new normal of education?
3. What are the coping mechanisms of indigenous high school students amidst the new normal of education?

### Methodology

This study employed Heideggerian phenomenology to explore the participant's lived experiences.

### Participants of the Study

The participants of this study are the ten (10) IP learners that are part of the Manobo Tribe at Mindanao that is currently enrolled for this academic year and before the pandemic outbreak. The participants are ages 14 to 17 and from grade 9 to grade 11 students, and all the participants reside in Mindanao.

### Instrument of the Study

In this study, the researchers used a semi-structured guide as the research instrument. Salvador, Juan and Sandoval (2017) stated that semi-structured interviews are commonly used when the aim is to gain information on the perspectives, understanding, and meanings constructed by people regarding the events and experiences of their lives. Thus, the interview questions are validated by professionals. The researchers provide an open-ended question and are divided into three themes to explore the life experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of the Indigenous students.

### Data Collection Process

Conducting data gathered from ten (10) indigenous students at Mindanao who willingly answered the questions that consist of 13 questions that are divided into three categories: the lived experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of the indigenous students. The researchers used an online interview since the participants are from Agusan del Sur, Mindanao. Before conducting an interview, the researchers clearly explained the confidentiality of the participants' answers. With the respondent's permission, the researchers recorded the interview for further analysis. The researchers conducted a group interview, and each participant was given a chance to share their experiences and emotional thoughts also; the researchers sought a translator since the participants' first language is Dulangan Manobo. After the interview, the researchers extensively analyzed and transcribed the gathered data.

### Ethical Considerations

The participants are aware of their rights before conducting an interview, and the respondents are aware of why their personal information is being collected, how it will be used, and to whom it will be disclosed. Hence, the respondents are protected under Republic Act 10173, also known as Data Privacy Act (DPA). In addition, the respondents are qualified in the criteria as respondents and willingly participate in the study with the guidance of their parents/guardians.

### Data Analysis Procedure

Various research approaches can be used to collect qualitative information. Also, one of the most effective approaches to avoid content inaccuracy is to record and transcribe interviews which comes with eliminating content errors (Jacobs, 2019).

In this study, interpretative phenomenological analysis

(IPA) based on the modified Van Kaam approach popularized by Moustakas was used. The seven steps are horizontalization, reduction and elimination of the data, clustering and thematizing, validation, construction of textual descriptions, construction of structural description, and incorporating the textual and structural descriptions into themes.

## Results and Discussion

Based on the data collected, the following themes were identified in this study; namely, (1) The Hindrances, and (2) The Path to Success. Likewise, the following subthemes were identified from the data-gathering and are based on their perspectives.

### The Hindrances

The hindrances shows the daily struggle of the participants were from traveling to school and onto the financial expense on the school and lastly into getting a low score on a challenging lesson the participants encountered.

### Disappointments encountered

The participants encountered disappointment itself when the participants encountered a challenging lesson to learn when the professor gave a brief informal test and got a low score from it. As the participant stated that if the lesson is hard and the students cannot fully comprehend the lesson, they will get a low score on the test which results in their disappointment.

“Yung ano yung maliit lang yung score mo yung ganyan yung mahirap yung mga lessons hindi mo na makuha yung mga lessons yung mababa score mo”

According to Wright, (2013) just as earning a disappointing grade can elicit negative emotions. Additionally, some students claimed that their dread and worry prevented them from talking about the poor grade.

It is justified by the statement of Participant 12.

“Nag aalala po kasi ako na baka mabully ako baka kasi sabihin nila taga tribo ako kaya mahina utak ko”

These negative emotional reactions show that students who are worried about how a grade conversation could make them look may push back their intellectual disappointment in order to keep a straight face.

### Struggles in achieving their goals

The participants pertain to the researchers that one of the hindrances of achieving their goals is financial instability. The participants showed the struggle when their projects were being proclaimed by the teacher. Some of the participants have the same answer with Participant 4 about their problems in finance.

*“Pinansyal talaga. Yung may mga projects. Walang maibibili kasi walang pinansyal.”*

Another struggle that the participants experienced now, because they are already permitted to do face-to-face discussion, was traveling from their home to their school. And even before, during lockdown, they have to cross town from another to get their modules. Based on the study of Seridon (2020), due to the modular mode of education, one of the challenges that the students encountered was lack of transportation to go to school.

*“Oo. travel talaga. Hindi, meron kaming motor pero pang gasolina walang budget. Tapos dahan dahan lang kame baka kase madisgrasya.”*

Participant 4 added that going to school is also her struggle aside from their financial problem.

### Language barrier

The participants were able to tell the researchers that they are having a hard time understanding the lessons because of the language barrier and their teachers were using words that they cannot comprehend, thus, this affected their performance in school. Participant 11 said that..

[Kagaya nung malalalim na english di ko maintidihan, minsan nakakahiya kasi pag nag rerecite kami sa room wala akong masagot]

According to McConville (2019), students studying a second language frequently have trouble expressing themselves if they don't fully master that language. Their capacity to learn may be hampered by the resulting mental stress.

Based on the study conducted by Penfold (1996) cited by Bandara et al. (2020), one of the factors that causes the struggles of the indigenous students was the language barrier and it is affecting their academic performance.

## Lack of resources

Researching important keywords are needed for the participants' schoolwork. The participants stated that one of the modular work hindrances is not being able to search important keywords, for that the participants struggle to find the latest information they need to complete a necessity schoolwork. Participant 1 shared that sometimes they are not allowed to use the computers at school and most of the time teachers are the one using it.

*“Minsan hindi namin magamit. Maraming gumagamit lalo na mga teacher.”*

*This can affect the student's drive to study as they can't accomplish anything because of lack of resources, which is justified by the study of Herward (2009) cited by Maffea (2020), he stated that the availability of a wide range of educational tools helps pique learners' interests and keep them engaged.*

*[Wala kaming masearch kasi wala kaming gadget pang search, walang pera din pang renta sa computer shop, may computer pero walang internet sa eskwelahan]*

## The Path to Success

The positive outcome of the participants to success is based on Craven et al. (2005) cited by Bishop et al. (2021) is the involvement of the participants to value the education and inclining their importance in goals when doing their modular schoolwork thus this shows their own sense of efficacy to their academic capacity.

## Stepping outside the comfort zone

The participants' knowledge are being challenged when answering the school work and based on McInerney (2012) cited by Bishop et al. (2021) the achievement of the indigenous students involves them challenging themselves therefore the merit of the schoolwork makes them like the school and valuing the education they learn.

*[Kahit po na nahihirapan kami, nakaka-kuha parin po kami ng awards at nakaka gana po mag aral pag narerecognize nila ang efforts mo]*

Based on the study of Steinmayr et al. (2019) Goals, task values, ability self-concepts, and achievement motives are only a few of the many diverse constructions that make up achievement motivation.

According to UNESCO, (2018) Major barriers to equal

access to education include racial and cultural prejudice in schools, which results in subpar academic performance and increased dropout rates.

Some of the students doesn't have the luxury to have a proper transportation just to go to school, if they have one, they are not pleasant to everyone and it was justified by the statements of the participants that we interviewed.

*“Naglalakad lang ako papuntang eskwela”* and

*“Meron kaming motor pero pang gasolina walang budget. Tapos dahan dahan lang kame baka kase madisgrasya.”*

Additionally, indigenous children are more likely to be starving, unwell, and exhausted when they arrive at school; they experience bullying frequently. But despite of those situations, the indigenous students still go to school and stepping outside their comfort zone for their future.

## Dreams to chase

Participants pertain to the researchers if they don't achieve their dreams they don't know where they are going. Based on Martin et al (2013) cited by Bishop (2021) the indigenous students also face the educational disadvantage and have an academic buoyancy. Therefore, the participants have a desire to be challenging themselves and value their education.

*[Ano para makaahon sa hrap ng buhay. para makamit ang aking pangarap na teacher at matulungan yung mga batang walang kaya sa pag aaral yon]*

Abrahamsen and Drange (2015) found that ethnic minorities' job aspirations are higher than those of majority students', but their expectations for their careers are not high.

## Support of family

The participants told the researchers that their family's support is the reason why they are studying. Having a family behind a student's back is important resulting in a positive effect on the academic performance of the students. (Roksa & Kinsley, 2019)

*[Pag sinasabi nila nanay at tatay na mag aral ako Mabuti kahit di mataas basta pasado, natutuwa ako, nahihikayat ako mag aral]*

According to Bernardo et al. (2019), parents have a



significant part in their children's intellectual development. Parents must help their children succeed academically by giving them spiritual and financial support, as well as by investing time in them.

### Fun while studying

To have fun while studying the participants tend to socialize and talk with their own peers while wandering around their own campus. Based on the study of Tisza (2021) fun is often considered as an essential element of learning. This shows also the factor of their fun while studying to achieve their own educational attainment.

Participant 7 shared their way of having fun while wearing a blissful face, showing that it is the way of coping up in their situation.

“Ako naman ay masaya naman po kapag nandon na ako sa paaralan kasama mga kaklase ko at yung guro ko dahil mag kwekwentuhan kami nang mga kaklase ko at yon.”

[*Ako naman ah madalas mahilig ako makipag kwentuhan sa classmates pero nag iistudy den yun lang at gumagala sa campus*]

Additionally according to Kwadzo, (2014), students regularly face different emotional and physical signs of stress, it stands to reason that these students could experience serious health issues. All of the pupils engage in leisure and non-leisure activities to alleviate stress.

### Taking a break

According to Charkhabi et al, (2013) Academic burnout is a three-dimensional syndrome that comprises diminished self-achievement, depersonalization, and emotional weariness. Based on Participant 8's response, when they feel tired from studying they just rest and continue their work after taking a break.

“Sa akin naman pinapahinga ko ung isip ko kapag okay na balik ulit ako. Dahil kung ipilit mo wala ka rin matututunan. “

In support, National Institutes of Health (2021) stated that resting or taking a break can help the brain to learn new knowledge or new skills.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings, these are the derived conclusions:

1. The reason why IP learners were not satisfied with their performance is because they cannot understand some of the lessons due to the language barrier.
2. IP learners are committed to finish their studies, however some of the students lack resources for studying, like gadgets for researching, they do not have cellphones. And the other students may have gadgets or cellphones, their internet connection is low or not accessible in some places at their location.

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