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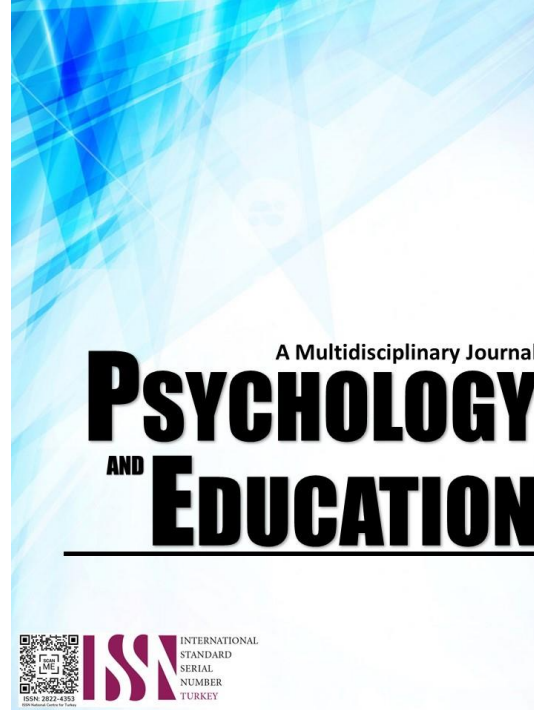
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The Quality of Life and Experiences of Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) Grantees

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Abstract

In the past years, many students had problems with their finances, especially their expenses for education. Many of the students are affected by the crisis financially, emotionally, and by their well-being. That is why the government provides programs that will help the students with their problems with school expenses, and that is through the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Further, the primary goal of this study is to explore the TES Grantees' lived experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms. Furthermore, these are the study's findings: (1) The grantees find the TES very helpful regarding finances that will tackle their academic needs, such as tuition fees and school learning materials. (2) Many students value government assistance that motivates them to maintain their grades.

Keywords: *quality of life, challenges, subsidy, lived experiences, tertiary education*

Introduction

One of the best experiences in this life is when a student goes to school, doing specific tasks and all that can improve the learning and knowledge, skills, and experiences. But not all learners can afford educational needs. Some people are not fortunate enough to get into college for many reasons, especially lacking financial matters. Scholarships or subsidies greatly support them if they are pursuing to complete their college education. However, according to Asuncion et al. (2018), the primary purpose of the government was to ordain the Unified Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education Act (R.A. No. 10687) or The UniFAST last May 11, 2016, because it allows individuals to completely access the quality education they want and provide enough funds on this project and hoping to add more grantees in Tertiary Education. That kind of project is a huge boost to our society. It plays a major or significant role in making the percentage of students dropping out get low, and it is a significant growth in the whole world, especially in the country.

As reported by Purigay (2020), Tertiary Education Subsidy provides the will or persistence to finish their college degree and also shows that the focus and eagerness to the discussions and different kinds of tasks in their school results in excellence in academic performance. Thus, college students are completely informed of the benefits they claim under the UniFAST Organization. With the government's funds for students' educational assistance, it will enhance their persistence, raising their motivation and inspiration to achieve their college degrees. The subsidy is pivotal to students because it affects their

academics and lessens the stress because of the government's support. In accordance with Importante et al. (2019), some grantees are considered unsuccessful due to many issues wherein they have not completed their Re-Entry Action Plans (REAPs). Qualities, motivation, and support from the government are considered their achievement for success. Not only are financial issues the characteristics of a scholar, but these are the list qualities you will possess: eagerness or commitment, leveling their doings or passion for their craft, and connection to an organization are considered great scholars.

Meanwhile, in the manner of Cagasan et al. (2019), many scholars are very thankful for their financial support, it is one of the significant contributions to their academic success. The financial support they received also contributed to their motivation to do activities and perform well in school to finish their degree. Having support from the government facilitated their academic success and it gave them motivation and persistence to continue their study. Aside from that, they said that they improve their competencies in their field of specialization, their confidence rises, and they have many opportunities for their career and development. Furthermore, as stated by Ahmad et al. (2019), the subsidy for higher education has been less developed because of the higher percentage of the students that are enrolled that are rich compared to the students having financial crises resulting in the expanding financial gap between rich and poor. That is why the government is wondering if they stick with the present policies or stop the scholarship because of the situation. Due to the new policy, increasing fees for rich people may positively affect higher education without any bad

effect on the distribution of scholarships.

On the contrary, in accordance with Gonzales (2019), the tuition fees are not completely done when it comes to supplying and providing free tuition. Figuring out the crisis of the country in education not only the government will do the solution such as executing the law just like "Iskolar ng Bayan" for incoming college students, rather create more programs for all students and be comprehensive to help uneducated youths and to the poor category of the society. Additionally, in line with Jurada et al. (2022), there is no substantial impact of the scholarship on educational success in institutions. However, there must be further understanding of the poor and deserving students who want to proceed with their studies immediately. Moreover, in accord with Alda (2022), scholars' self-esteem and motivation in both school and life are affected by the severity and impact of experiencing stigma. Every aspect of the scholar's life may be negatively impacted by stigma, while the majority of them were able to overcome the challenges, some of them also gave up.

This study aims to provide reliable inquiries and the TES grantees' lived experiences. Optimistically, it must accentuate the educational assistance of the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) and how it can benefit the students despite the challenges they had experienced as college students. The study will contribute to the comprehensive understanding of the field of psychology in terms of the aspects that can be experienced by college students while living as TES grantees.

Research Questions

This study will explore the experiences of tertiary education subsidy grantees. Thus, this study intended to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of tertiary education subsidy grantees?
2. What are the challenges faced by tertiary education subsidy grantees?
3. What are the coping mechanisms of tertiary education subsidy grantees?

Methodology

Heideggerian Phenomenology is a technique used in qualitative research to provide thorough evaluations of human lived experiences. Martin Heidegger's phenomenology is used to explain the lived experience of participants, and qualitative researchers can use it for methodological assistance. This presented a wide range of fundamental ideas as part of phenomenological philosophy (Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016). These principles include the idea of being, being in the world, interactions with other people, things, and things in the world, as well as temporality, spatiality, and the care system. The research design has a distinct advantage of being successful when researching topics. The study's main purpose, to differentiate the lived experiences of tertiary education subsidy grantees, led the researchers to choose and use the approach for demonstration.

Participants of the Study

The participants in this study were TES Grantees enrolled during School Year 2022-2023. Fifteen (15) participants participated in this study.

Instrument of the Study

The study used an interview guide to gather the data in a methodical and coherent manner. The interview guide's questions focused more on the lived experiences of the participants and it is subjected to content validation for its validity. Before the data gathering process, the participants were asked for consent research.

Data Collection Process

In order to gather the essential data on the Quality of Life and Experiences of Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) Grantees in Bocaue, Bulacan, the researchers used a semi-structured interview guide as a data collection tool. The researchers created 20 questions on the survey to comprehend the experiences.

The questionnaire was made to be effective to know about respondents' perspectives and ideas while also getting far more in-depth with conversational statements that would be helpful for comprehending the data in a better way. There are 20 various questions on the questionnaire: 4 rapport questions and 16 questions about the experiences of students that they had faced.

To ensure that responders from various backgrounds

could fully grasp the questionnaire's contents, it was translated into both English and Tagalog. The accuracy of a measuring device is determined by its validity. Online interviews using the prepared questionnaire are completed for this study.

Researchers interviewed 15 grantees of Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) grantees and evaluated the applicability, practicality, and efficiency of the devised questionnaire in terms of measuring the study variables. The survey was handed out in a few colleges in Bocaue, Bulacan. The study aims to explain to the participants that confidentiality remains and that any information submitted is safeguarded.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers requested permission from their respective research professors to collect the data, tools, and procedures. Ethical standards are strictly followed to guarantee the promised permission. Legibility must be in all aspects of the study and also the principles, it is very helpful in guiding practices and research designs. This principle includes involuntary participation and confidentiality (Pritha, 2022). It is necessary that in the interview, the flow of conversation between the researchers and participants is on good terms and does not negatively affect the participants in different ways. This study has informed permission to contain the important details of the data and has the option of withdrawing any kind of participation in the study. As the Republic Act 10173 said, all the data and information that the participants will bring out to the researchers will be secure and confidential and will not be used for any kind of purposes and stated as it is.

Data Analysis Procedure

Qualitative data is gathered and used in a variety of methods. Recorded and transcribed interviews are one of the most efficient ways to eliminate content errors. A thorough analysis is necessary to make sense of the data collected from TES Grantees beforehand. The verbatim comments made by each interviewee were included in the transcripts, which were subjected to a thorough assessment. The analysis of Van Kaam popularized by Moustakas enables qualitative researchers to thoroughly examine the participants' narratives in order to comprehend the significance of the phenomenon for those who encountered the experiences (Statistics Solutions, 2022). The creation of draft guidelines and the representation of the themes that were gathered and connected to every piece of information followed the steps. The experiences of the

participants are expected to be the main focus of this study. All of these ensured strategies are in the data's information and are provided for reliability of, correctness, and certainty.

Results and Discussion

The following themes — (1) The Great Grant, (2) The Maintainer, and (3) The Unruffled — were found in this study based on the data gathered.

The Great Grant

Certainly, studying without a scholarship is putting pressure on students who are not from well-off families or families with no education-financed plans for their children. According to the participants, they are free from academic expenses (especially tuition fees) and can buy their academic needs with the remaining subsidy they receive annually.

Founded on The Great Grant, there are three aspects regarding what they have stated; self-confidence (I Am Sustained With My Needs), self-necessity (Trials and Determinations), and self-pride (Honored and Privileged).

I Am Sustained With My Needs

The majority of participants gave the same responses when the interviewer asked them how they appreciate the subsidy given as TES Grantees, with Participant #4 being an exception.

"Sa mga pangangailangan ko din, nakakabili ako ng mga gamit ko sa pag-aaral, like cellphone, ballpen, at notebook."

As indicated by Participant #4, she appreciates that the TES subsidy is enabling her to buy her needs for her academic needs.

"Nakakapag-aral ako ng libre at wala nang binabayarang tuition."

As implied in her statement, she has the self-confidence to continue studying. The degree of students' self-confidence affected their understanding in areas like involvement, in pursuing a goal, fostering an interest in the material, helping students feel less anxious, and making them feel at ease with their teachers, classmates, and in expressing their views on the material covered in class. (Akbari & Sadibzada, 2020).

Trials and Determinations

When asked how they recognize the importance of being one of the scholars of TES subsidy, most participants — with the exception of Participant #15 — gave the same answers.

"Ahm, ayun nga, dati talaga 'di ko alam yan kasi nga sa pinanggalingan ko, wala naman. Nung lumipat ako dito ng school, ayun nga, nalaman ko na may ganiyan silang program, so, sabi ko why not i-try ko, di'ba?"

As stated by Participant #15, explained she had to try joining. Because she wants to study in college.

"Kasi siyempre, kailangan din naman lalo sa panahon ngayon — lalo na nagka-pandemic, daming mga problem na kinaharap."

As she indicated, the TES subsidy is beneficial to her for her self-necessity. In general, the term "necessity" refers to a tight relationship between many beings, their constituent parts, or a being and its very existence (New Advent, 2022).

Honored and Privileged

Apart from Participant #8, the majority of participants provided the same responses when asked how blessed they are that they have the subsidy.

"Oo, nakaka-proud yun, kasi yung mga gusto mo di na kailangan hingin sa magulang mo. Kasi yung TES na ang magbibigay sa'yo, eh."

As he implied, he has self-pride. When a goal is achieved and one's success has been acknowledged and praised by others, pride, a self-conscious emotion, is felt (American Psychological Association, 2022).

The Maintainer

Most of the respondents said that maintaining grades might be a factor in their pressure because, as the respondents said, the big rival or counterpart of free education is the requirement of grades. But the assistance from subsidy helps them to continue, to double their effort, and be motivated in an educational setting.

Founded in The Maintainer; there are three aspects that may be considered on this topic: Self-Esteem (Thriving for Decent Grades), Optimism (Optimistic Overcomes), and Perseverance (Next Chances).

Thriving For Decent Grades

Many of the respondents answered that they need to strive hard because they know that the College journey is not easy and also due to maintaining their good grades. That is why Participant #10 said:

"Yun nga, kasi meron akong maintaining grade, kailangan wala akong bagsak. Ayun, sinisikap kong kahit pasado at di ako bagsak. Kasi sukli na lang yun na effort para sa assistance na binibigay ng gobyerno like TES."

Moreover, the respondents believe that if they strive hard many opportunities will come for them. According to Kendra Cherry (2022), Self-esteem is when we have an image of how we perceive our abilities and characteristics on how we handle things or on how we accomplish goals. It is one factor in why students are striving for better grades.

Optimistic Overcomes

Failure is common in life, especially in studying. There are so many factors that a student will encounter in their college life, like now, the respondents having trouble with the internet with a slow connection and other related circumstances, these are the major problems when it comes to online classes. But the respondents sometimes face challenges and overcome them, which results in being a better version of themselves especially because they are grantees so it adds up to the responsibility. However, Participant #6 stated:

"Pero hindi naman sya mahirap eh kasi may inaantay nga tayong kapalit sa bagay na 'yon."

The main point is that if a person has a positive mindset, everything is possible. As Fariyal Asad (2020) said, being optimistic is good because it will result in a positive outcome; matching efforts and perseverance can lead to the desired goal.

Next Chances

According to Dan Kristoph (2022), a person with high self-perseverance or strong conviction will maintain students on the right path, so if a student maximizes their self-perseverance their grades will also maintain. Furthermore, the participants are very passionate about their learning and maintaining grades. In behalf of the same responses, Participant #14 respond:

"Sinasabi ko na lang sa sarili ko na 'better luck next time' or 'bawi nalang next time' — na kapag kinakailangan mag-focus sa ganito, galingan na lang sa susunod."

Also, like other participants, they mentioned that the government offered their assistance, so studying and thriving well is what they need to do.

The Unruffled

The respondents are stress-free because they are not worried about how they pay their tuition fees and also their academic needs.

Founded in The Unruffled, three aspects may be considered on this topic: Nonchalant (I Am Not An Overthinker), Positive Emotion (Delighted and Motivated), and Unworried (Cannot See The Difficulties).

I Am Not An Overthinker

Emotional and mental status is necessary when it comes to education because the state of a person plays a large role in the learning and development of a student. Moreover, sometimes the outcome of the attainments is depending on the condition of the student that is why according to Participant #11:

"Sa emotional being ko, yun nga, wala akong iniisip na kung ano-ano, di ako nai-stress sa tuwing bayaran na ng tuition."

As implied by the participant, it shows unbothered and lighthearted energy. According to the Oxford Dictionary, nonchalance is "the state of being casually calm and comfortable, without any tension." (Ria Dalwani, 2019).

Delighted and Motivated

The majority of respondents stated that when the TES payout is ongoing, they are excited because they know that all of their efforts will be rewarded. They also feel motivated to complete their task because of the subsidy.

Participant #8 explained how TES can help colleges become inspired and more productive:

"Siyempre, masaya— kasi alam mo namang meron, eh. nakakapag-motivate siya. Kasi (pag) paparating na yung TES, sisipagin na 'kong gawin yung mga activity ko, ganiyan."

As stated by participant #8, it gives him happiness, the positive emotion that results in resiliency is increased by joyful feelings (the emotional resources needed for coping). They increase our consciousness and enable us to notice additional choices for resolving issues. If

individuals encounter at least three times as many good feelings than bad ones, they feel and perform at their finest (Nemours KidsHealth, 2018).

Cannot See The Difficulties

The majority of respondents stated that they don't have to worry about difficulty studying and paying money on tuition fees because there is already a TES program that gives them educational assistance.

Participant #15 explained that TES is very helpful in reducing her worries and cannot see the difficulty in learning:

"Ahm, actually hindi. Kasi para sakin yung TES, ayun nga, tulong siya para sa 'tin, so, wala akong maisip na way para magkaroon ng paghihirap (sa pag-aaral) diyan."

Furthermore, being unworried is implied in the participants' statements. According to Merriam-Webster (2022), 'unworriedness' is not afflicted with mental distress or agitation.

According to TES Grantees, who have varying experiences but share similar viewpoints, they are flourishing and exerting effort merely to complete their studies with the aid of the TES subsidy. The themes — The Great Grant, The Maintainer, and The Unruffled — had to be further developed to move on to the summary of findings, conclusion, and recommendation chapters.

Conclusion

The following conclusions are derived: Due to the great program under the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the participants are grateful that they lessen their stress because the subsidy has an impact when it comes to their school expenses. Due to this platform, they are one step away from achieving their dreams and getting their college degrees. Moreover, due to this program, the participants are making efforts to remain, and the graduating students keep going and going. The participants' families are also grateful that the program can provide free and quality education for their children.

Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) helps participants not only with financial needs and school expenses but also makes the participants motivated and driven. Some students increase their positivity in targeting their goals, even their academic achievements. One

factor is that they can afford the materials needed for studying, which results in more manageable school tasks. Also, TES helps the student to be better in general — in addition, the TES Grantees become eager to thrive to remain in studying. Even though the participants are having difficulties maintaining their grades, the researchers must say that they handle their varied situations well.

Overall, Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) benefits the grantees in all aspects. Still, as the participants responded, they said that maintaining their grades is one of the most significant trials despite circumstances. Being a beneficiary in the CHED & UniFAST program is a responsibility, but based on the participants, they are showing hard work, perseverance, and optimism in continuing their studies. Also, some become confident in studying because they can continue without paying their tuition fees. It is one of the great outcomes that the participants may acquire as TES grantees. Hopefully, all grantees will excel in this program.

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