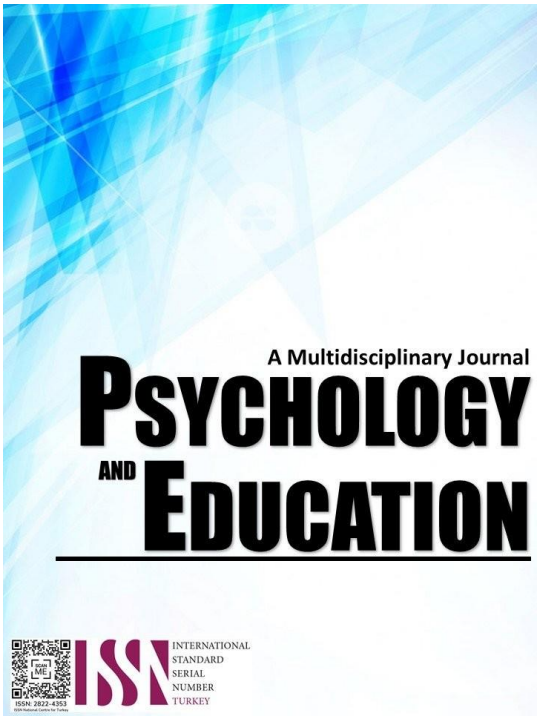
BREAKING SILENCE: THE QUALITY OF LIFE, EXPERIENCES, AND CHALLENGES OF BALIK ARAL GRADE 12 STUDENTS



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Research Article

Breaking Silence: The Quality of Life, Experiences, and Challenges of Balik Aral Grade 12 Students

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Abstract

The growth of individuals and society heavily relies on education. Certain hindrances may prompt some students to halt their academic pursuits temporarily. This is known as "Balik-aral." The exploration of the quality of life, lived experiences, and challenges of grade 12 Balik-aral students was undertaken by the authors to break their silence and help them by developing recommendations that could be presented to the school's key stakeholders. A phenomenological approach was used to understand the phenomenon in a study involving five grade 12 balik-aral students from different strands currently enrolled in a public school in Cebu City, Philippines. A structured interview was used to collect data, and significant themes emerged during data analysis using Colaizzi's method. The study revealed several sub-themes, including age disparities and pressure to obtain the diploma while maintaining quality of life. Additionally, key informants emphasized the sense of community and an immersive learning environment in their lived experiences as balik-aral students. Finally, competing priorities and scarcity of resources emerged as significant challenges for those involved in the study. Consequently, the investigation has determined that balik-aral students must be treated equitably to foster their engagement with their peers and enhance their self-assurance, ultimately leading to academic success.

Keywords: *Department of Education, balik-aral students, quality of life, lived experiences, challenges, grade 12, Cebu City, Philippines*

Introduction

In the Philippines, education is crucial for developing literacy skills and making wise life decisions. The Department of Education (DepEd) is the primary government agency responsible for ensuring quality education for all, especially at the basic education level (DepEd, n.d.). Their vision aims to empower students to reach their full potential and significantly contribute to the nation's growth and development (DepEd, n.d.).

Education plays a pivotal role in the development of individuals and the progress of society as a whole. As students strive for academic excellence, they often encounter various obstacles that can impede their progress. According to Susilo (2022), external factors often hinder students' learning progress, and addressing this issue requires the involvement of both parents and teachers. Another researcher recommended that students need various assistance to overcome internal and external obstacles to academic success. This assistance includes individualized strategies, motivation, social, psychological, and instrumental support (Saltürk, 2021). These barriers can hinder them from achieving their full potential and may negatively impact their academic achievements. One phenomenon that has gained attention is the increasing number of balik-aral students in public schools. "Balik-aral" pertains to students who have returned to school after discontinuing their education, as Oracion et al. (2020) mentioned. This phenomenon is a common occurrence in specific educational systems, where students may have had to leave school due to various reasons such as financial constraints, personal issues, or other reasons. Balik-aral students often face challenges, including catching up on missed coursework and adapting to new learning environments. In the study conducted by Oracion et al. (2020), they presented data on balik-aral learners from 2015 to 2018. It is evident from the data that the year 2016 had the highest number of balik-aral students, specifically 213,364 male and 157,351 female students, with a total of 370,715 students. Balik-aral students can complete their education and attain academic goals with proper support and resources.

After thoroughly reviewing various journals, the researchers found literature discussing balik-aral students. It emphasizes parents' crucial role in enhancing these students' proficiency levels (Cervantes, 2021). A separate researcher examined the balik-aral initiative of the Philippine National Police (PNP), exploring its perceived significance within the organization (Pajarillo-Guadamor, 2016). No studies have been conducted on the well-being, personal encounters, and obstacles balik-aral students face in public schools. This study can expand the body of knowledge on the Balik-aral program and provide a pioneering perspective on the current status and viewpoints of public school Balik-aral students.

After observing balik-aral students in a public school, the researchers noted that those who had previously attended private institutions or had taken a break from schooling faced challenges adapting to the new environment. This piqued the researchers' interest in exploring the quality of life, lived experiences, and various hurdles these students face and ultimately providing actionable solutions to help them become more productive and engaged in and outside the classroom.

Research Questions

The reintegration of students into the educational system after a hiatus presents a unique set of challenges. Balik-aral students often

face academic, social, and emotional hurdles that differ from their continuously enrolled peers. Understanding their situation, precisely their quality of life, experiences, and challenges faced by grade 12 Balik-Aral students, guides the researchers in crafting insights valuable to the school's key stakeholders. The study investigated three main domains:

1. What is the quality of life of grade 12 Balik-aral students?
2. What are their lived experiences?
3. What are the challenges they encountered in returning to school?
4. Based on the study's findings, what recommendations can be provided to the school's key stakeholders?

Literature Review

The following sub-headings house contemporary literature and empirical evidence on education in the Philippines, factors affecting students' pursuit of academic achievement, and the balik-aral program.

Education in the Philippines

The significance of education in the process of nation-building cannot be overstated. It is supported by a series of old studies that show that education in the Philippines in the 1900s reflected cultural influences on communication. According to Bai's (2023) explanation, Spanish colonialism lasted more than 300 years. During that time, the Catholic church heavily influenced the education system. Additionally, the Spanish government founded schools mainly intended for the Spanish elite, and the education provided was primarily centered on religious teaching. Moreover, the research found that the Philippine academic system confronts several obstacles, such as poverty, ongoing armed conflicts, insufficiency of resources and infrastructures, and the adverse impact of the recent pandemic on the system holistically.

According to a reliable source, many Filipinos continue to miss out on opportunities to learn due to issues surrounding access to education, quality of education received, and current conditions of the learning environment in rural areas (UNICEF Philippines, n.d.). These issues require immediate attention and resolution to ensure that all individuals have equitable access to high-quality education and can reach their full potential. A recent study found that only 50% of children aged 3 to 4 are enrolled in daycare, and approximately 78% complete primary education. Additionally, a significant number of schools, particularly public schools, need proper sanitation facilities such as toilets and clean water, which has resulted in 2.8 million children being out of school. These statistics indicate an ongoing issue in the education system that requires immediate attention and prioritization.

In June 2012, the Philippine government introduced the K+12 Curriculum to reform its primary education system. This new structure added two years of schooling to the existing 10-year program. However, this educational policy and structural change is complex. The Filipino people's experience and participation in the diaspora, the constant thought of seeking better opportunities, and economic insecurities have all contributed to the discourse on K+12 (Reyes, 2013). Consequently, this reform marks a structural transformation and a shift in the imagination of the Filipino people's position within the nation and the world. The implementation of the K-12 Basic Education Program in the Philippines is now at its peak, but there has been a rise in the number of students dropping out, being held back, or migrating (Sarte & Palaoag, 2019). Various studies have found that teachers and students have mixed feelings about the program's implementation. Polishing the program could help reduce the problems that arise. These findings are consistent across studies by Invento et al. (2017) and Trance & Trance (2019).

Factors Affecting Students' Pursuit of Academic Achievement

Students' academic achievement is the outcome of the numerous factors that influence students' academic performance. These factors are why some students have a hard time continuing their studies. The study conducted by Arora and Singh (2017) shows that the family environment of the students is one of the significant predictors of the academic performance of college students. Several studies suggest that parental involvement can significantly contribute to academic success for students, irrespective of whether they attend public or private schools (Boonk et al., 2021; Hashmi & Akther, 2013). Furthermore, research has also emphasized the importance of considering post-school success and parents' continued role in their adult children's lives (Hirano & Rowe, 2016).

Another factor that affects students' academic success is their non-attendance due to issues relating to financial hardship and participation in part-time employment, according to Paisey and Paisey (2004). Also, it is worth noting that Kornguth et al.'s (1994) study supports the idea that students skip classes because they do not feel like they belong in their new environment. Bijsmas and Schakel (2018) shared the same sentiment that attendance is essential for a student to succeed and an indication that they are committed and participating in class.

Moreover, students from families with low socio-economic status, parents who do not monitor their children's homework, negative attitudes towards teachers, and lack of value for education all lead to higher levels of truancy (Attwood & Croll, 2006). Truancy, in turn, has a strong association with adverse outcomes in terms of academic performance. School absences can adversely affect academic achievement, except for family holidays. However, the extent of the impact may differ depending on the type of absence and the educational stage, as per Klein et al.'s (2022) findings.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative method engaging specifically to a phenomenological approach to discover the worldview of the Balik-Aral grade 12 students at a public school in Cebu City, Philippines. Using this approach, the researchers delved into the three considered aspects: the quality of life, lived experiences, and challenges encountered by these students.

Participants

The study's key informants were the five (5) grade 12 Balik-Aral students at a public school, and they were selected using judgment sampling, more commonly known as purposive sampling. The selection process was based on the set inclusion criteria by the researchers, including (1) documents that proved they were Balik-Aral senior high school students, (2) they were of legal age, and (3) they volunteered to participate in the interview. Moreover, the researchers split the informants to cover all strands available in the school, namely the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM), Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), General Academic Strand (GAS), and Technical Vocational Livelihood (TVL). The study was conducted in one of the public schools in the Cebu City division and considered as implementing where the researchers were assigned.

Instruments

The researchers used a structured interview as a guide to gather necessary information about the quality of life, experience, and challenges of balik-aral students. The tool was initially validated by the researchers, who are public school teachers and have direct experience with balik-aral students.

The interview was composed of two parts. The first part centers on the preliminary wherein the researchers tasked with the interview introduced themselves as a reason for the interview and conducted a short kamustahan session. After the preliminary, a discussion of the critical components of the interview followed. The first component allows the informants to share their quality of life in their family and school, especially returning to school. Subsequently, the interviewers asked for the lived experiences of the informants to know their experiences as they returned to school. Lastly, the challenges encountered by the informants that affected their performance were also asked. Furthermore, during interviews, informants were allowed to discuss a phenomenon through their values, attitudes, and self-evaluations. The audio-recorded interview transcripts were carefully examined to find identifiable, overarching themes compatible with the informant's experiences.

Data Analysis

A variety of methods can be used to collect qualitative data. Making sense of the data acquired from grade 12 balik-aral students' quality of life, lived experiences, and challenges through audio-recorded interviews is one of the greatest approaches to preventing content discrepancies. The exact responses of each participant will be included verbatim in the interview transcripts, which will be meticulously reviewed.

The study employed the Colaizzi (1978) method in analyzing qualitative data. Colaizzi's phenomenological approach may be applied to comprehend people's experiences fully and confidently (Wirihana et al., 2017). Colaizzi's method covers a series of steps: (1) each transcript was read and re-read to get an overarching sense of the entire content; (2) significant statements relating to the phenomenon under study were extracted from transcripts; (3) formulated meanings were gleaned from significant statements; (4) organization of formulated meanings into clusters of themes; (5) incorporation of findings into a detailed description; and (6) description of the fundamental structure.

Ethical Considerations

Under research ethics, the protection of human rights was considered at every level of the investigation for this study. To do this, the researchers ensured that the interview questions did not contain any identifying remarks or information, such as the names of the key informants. The study's key informants also gained potential benefits from participation as they can give valuable input and inspiration to other stakeholders. They would have access to a beneficial intervention they otherwise might not have. During the interview question-answering process, they would feel physical discomfort, such as fatigue and boredom. When answering interview questions, self-disclosure, introspection, or mental pain may result in psychological or emotional distress. Additionally, the key informants consistently attested to the privacy of their data and voluntary participation in this study. To do this, among other things, the volunteers would receive an informed consent form that outlines the study's objectives and a confidentiality promise.

Results

This section revealed the themes that emerged after the researchers gathered, analyzed, and coded the raw data from the key informants who were grade 12 balik-aral students at a public school. Using the Colaizzi's method, the following are the themes discovered in the study:

Table 1. *Key Informants' Perceived Quality of Life, Lived Experiences, and Challenges as a Balik-aral Student in a Public School in Cebu City*

Significant Themes	*Core Ideas*	*Highlighted Verbatim Response/s*
Quality of Life		
- Age Disparity	- Age discrepancies affect the quality of life of Balik-aral students, as they must first adjust to their classmates' maturity level, making it challenging to engage with the new generation.	- *Sa pagbalik nako skwela, kinahanglan jud nako mag-adjust sa ako mga classmates kay wa sila sa ako age level nga niresulta na maglisod ko paghinabi sa ilaha.* (As I go back to school, I need to adjust to my classmates because they are not at my age level, which affects the way I communicate with them). - Informant 1 - *Pag-una, naglisod ko pagtagad sa ako mga classmates kay dako kaayo ang amo age gap* (First, I am having a hard time talking to my classmates since we have a huge age gap) - Informant 4
- The Pressure in Obtaining the Diploma	- Despite facing various obstacles, such as pressure from family and friends, balik-aral students remain determined and committed to earning their diploma, which brings pride to their parents.	- *Bisan pa sa pressure na gihatag sa ako parents sa ako pagbalik sa eskwela, madasigon gihapon ko na malampos ko ani na makakuha ug diploma.* (Despite the pressure that my parents put on me, I am motivated to finish and obtain the diploma). – Informant 3 - *Malipayon kaayo ko kay nakabalik nako skwela ug mapadayon nako ang pag gab-ot sa ako pangandoy na diploma and hinaot ko na ako ginikanan malipay pud puhon.* (I am delighted because I have returned to school, and I can continue to achieve my dream of a diploma and hope that my parents will be proud someday.) – Informant 2
Lived Experiences		
- Sense of Community	- The students who went back to school experienced a feeling of belongingness as their peers and teachers treated them just like any other regular student, without any discrimination or differentiation.	- *Dako ang akong kalipay kay mayo ang pagtrato sa akong mga klasmeyt ug mga magtutudlo, ug giparehas ako sa usa ka ordinaryong estudyante.* (I feel so much happiness causes my classmates and teachers treated me well, and I get the same treatment as an ordinary student). – Informant 5 - *Mapasalamaton sa panag-uban nga gihatag sa akong mga klasmeyt bisan pa nga balik-aral ko nga estudyante o, ingnon ta, dili sa*

		ilang grupo sa miaging tuig. (I am grateful for the camaraderie that my classmates gave me even though I am a balik-aral student or, shall we say, not in their group last year). – Informant 1
- Immerse in a Learning Environment	- The balik-aral students were provided valuable learning opportunities, enabling them to gain relevant concepts and skills for their future endeavors. Also, they perceived that it boosted their academic performance, promoted learning in the community, and served as a testament to the importance of providing educational opportunities.	- *Bisan pa sa akong mga pakigbisog isip usa ka working student, nagpasalamat gihapon ko sa pagkat-on nga akong nakuha karong semester.* (Despite my struggles as a working student, I am still thankful for the learning I gained this semester.) - Informant 3
Challenges		
- Competing Priorities	- Many students face challenges in prioritizing their responsibilities while continuing their studies despite their difficulties. This has resulted in a need for effective strategies to manage their time and resources, which can enable them to attain academic success.	- *Nagkalisod jud sa pagtagad sa klase tungod sa ako eskedyul sa trabaho sa usa ka BPO sa Cebu City. Kanunay kong kulang sa tulog kay mahuman ang ako trabaho sa alas says sa buntag, ug alas siyete sa buntag magsugod ang klase. Kini nakapalisod kanako sa pagdumala sa akong panahon sa epektibong paagi.* (It is challenging to pay attention in class due to my work schedule at a BPO in Cebu City. I often lack sleep because my shift ends at 6 am and class starts at 7 am. This made me difficult to manage my time effectively.) – Informant 1 - *Ang pagkalayo nako sa akong anak ug problema sa panglawas nakababag kanako sa pagpadayon sa akong pagtuon.* (Being far away from my son and health problems are the hindrance that affects my studies.) – Informant 4 - *Nag-adjust kay working student man ko simultaneously, full-time student pud.* (I am still adjusting since I am a full-time working student.) – Informant 5
- Scarcity of Resources	- Many individuals perceive a shortage of essential resources, particularly time and money, as one of the primary hindrances for not completing tasks they have started. As a result, this leads to limited participation and distracted attention, which impacts their ability to absorb and comprehend all the lessons thoroughly.	- *Isip usa ka working student ug amahan, ang pagdumala sa oras nahimong lisod nga buluhaton. Ang pagbalanse sa duha ka mga tahas kasagarang adunay dakong hagit, nga mosangpot ngadto sa limitado nga partisipasyon sa klase. Tungod niini, dili nako mahatag ang akong*

	hingpit nga atensyon sa mga kalihokan sa klase tungod sa lainlaing mga hinungdan. (As a working student and father, managing time has become a daunting task. Balancing both roles often poses a significant challenge, leading to limited class participation. As a result, I am unable to give my undivided attention to class activities due to varied reasons). – Informant 5

Discussion

Firstly, it is worth mentioning that age disparities and the pressure of obtaining a diploma were the main concerns for the quality of life of the key informants, who are balik-aral students. All of them were mature not just in age but also in their way of thinking about life. One key informant mentioned that he sometimes looks after his classmates since he is the oldest student in the class. Moreover, the pressure of obtaining a diploma is a significant concern for Balik-aral students striving to get the desired diploma. Most key informants share the same goal this year of receiving their diploma, and some aim to graduate with flying colors.

According to several studies, age disparity is a significant factor when assessing an individual. A study conducted by Kretschmann et al. (2021) suggests that elderly individuals often encounter difficulties while navigating social situations in their daily lives, which can lead to social anxiety. Older individuals commonly struggle with anxiety, uncertainty about their prospects, feelings of rejection or ostracism by their peers, and a sense of disconnection or lack of interest in romantic relationships with members of the opposite sex. Such challenges can be particularly daunting for older students, who may perceive themselves as not fitting in with their younger classmates or worry that their age could impede their progress toward achieving their academic goals due to academic stress (Baidoo-Anu & Acquah, 2021; Rosaline & Anggraeni, 2020). On the other hand, an old study has found that older undergraduate students perform better than their younger peers in various areas, including personal integration, lack of anxiety, theoretical orientation, and analytical problem-solving (Kasworm, 1980). These attributes are crucial for success in any field of study, and it is unsurprising that older students, with more life experience and maturity, exhibit these qualities. Additionally, Kay et al. (1983) noted that having older undergraduate students participate as peers in college classrooms resulted in positive changes regarding attitudes towards aging and intergenerational classes. Therefore, if you are a more senior student, you can take pride in your strengths and continue to thrive in your academic pursuits.

On the other side of the quality of life, a substantial amount of literature believes that obtaining a diploma is a pressure for a student. A study revealed that psychological stressors related to interpersonal relationships, academic performance, home environment, and social environment significantly affect the mental health of senior high school returnees (Xin-xi, 2008). These individuals often face challenges, such as adapting to a new environment, catching up on missed coursework, and building new relationships with peers and faculty members. Another study found that returners display lower confidence in completing their degree programs and report higher cost types, including financial, time, and opportunity costs, than direct-pathway students (Mosyjowsk et al., 2017). These results emphasize the need for universities and educators to provide adequate support and resources to help returnees overcome challenges and achieve their academic and personal goals.

Alternatively, Peters and Daly (2013) found that individuals who return to school to pursue graduate degrees, commonly referred to as "Returners," tend to have a higher expectancy of success. These individuals often possess valuable work experience and a clearer understanding of their academic goals, giving them an advantage over traditional students. Additionally, returners employ various strategies to mitigate the costs associated with graduate education. These strategies may include obtaining scholarships, grants, or employer tuition reimbursement, working part-time or full-time while attending school, or taking advantage of online or hybrid programs to reduce commuting and housing expenses. Overall, Returner's success and resourcefulness demonstrate the importance of perseverance and strategic planning when pursuing educational goals.

Secondly, the experiences of balik-aral students who served as key informants were examined. Table 1 displays the findings, indicating that a sense of community and immersion in the learning environment were the primary themes that emerged during the data analysis. Most participants felt a sense of belonging to the community and reported that teachers treated them no differently than other students. They also expressed happiness in not experiencing discrimination for being a balik-aral student. Furthermore, the balik-aral students enjoyed immersing themselves in the learning environment. They found acquiring relevant skills and concepts particularly beneficial, as it gives them an edge in their future endeavors, as shared by the key informants.

Humans need to belong and be accepted by a group. This can be a desire to be part of a peer group, gain acceptance from colleagues,

join a team, or be part of a religious group. Balik-aral students in the school also experienced a sense of belongingness or community. Research has shown that when students feel like they belong to a group or community, it can give them a sense of security, identity, and community (Jethwani-Keyser, 2008). This, in turn, can help to support their academic, social, and psychological development. Research has shown that parental involvement in children's education positively impacts various outcomes. For instance, studies suggest that it can lead to improved school attendance (Ahmadi et al., 2020), increased academic engagement (Pope & Miles, 2022), and positively influences students' attitudes, motives, beliefs, and behavior (Battistich et al., 1995).

One of the themes explored by the authors is "immersing in a learning environment" aside from the theme of "sense of community." This theme highlights that balik-aral students showed interest and commitment in completing their studies and striving to attain their ultimate goal: obtaining their diploma. Recent studies have shown that students exposed to an environment that promotes learning tend to perform better academically. For instance, Stepanenko et al. (2021) found that a positive school learning environment can help students achieve academic success by providing a supportive atmosphere that encourages creativity, independence, and self-directed learning. Another study showed that students who positively perceived their classroom as focused on mastery goals and had a favorable view of the classroom environment felt a stronger sense of connection to their school (Korpershoek et al., 2020). Moreover, Indumathy and Annadurai (2022) proposed that a well-functioning classroom environment can boost student success by fostering a structured learning atmosphere that improves students' academic abilities and skills and their social and emotional growth. In addition, research has demonstrated that school climate significantly influences students' academic performance, among other factors.

The primary challenges encountered by the key informants in going back to school were identified as competing priorities and scarcity of resources. A number of the key informants cited other pressing obligations as the reason for discontinuing their efforts to pursue further education. Furthermore, the lack of resources has been identified as significant to the key informants, as it hinders their decision to continue their studies. An informant has reported that insufficient funds to meet daily expenses and other financial obligations helped led to their decision to discontinue their studies.

Juggling multiple priorities alongside academic tasks can significantly burden a student (Khan & Ahsan-Ahmed, 2015; Gaedke et al., 2012). This often results in a challenging and overwhelming situation that can lead to academic underperformance and increased stress levels, impacting their health (Carmo et al., 2016). Acknowledging the importance of addressing this issue by providing appropriate support and resources to students is imperative. To address this concern, studies claimed that having time management skills will aid the problem, not totally address it, but somehow help the students continue studying and achieve their academic goals. Efficiency can be improved through time management by setting goals (Kirillov et al., 2015), using special education technologies to enhance competitiveness in school (Резник et al., 2018), and creating a life wheel for balance (Lyayuk et al., 2020). Furthermore, for students to craft a time management plan effectively, they should prioritize and balance work and personal health while also knowing themselves better (Vortherms & Neal, 2022).

Another emerging theme in the study is the need for more resources. Aside from the fact that money can help other people, indicated in the study of Robak et al. (2007), the authors also found that it can boost the students' feeling of security and pride in themselves. Different research reinforces Robak et al.'s discoveries and highlights that students' financial abilities are crucial to achieving academic and personal accomplishments (Cummins et al., 2009).

Time is a crucial resource for students, and managing it effectively is essential to avoid academic stress, according to Hamim and Rahmawati's research in 2022. If a student fails to use their limited available time efficiently, it can result in procrastination, a significant problem. A study shows that approximately 80% of university students suffer from academic procrastination primarily due to poor time management, lack of planning, laziness, and stress (Fentaw et al., 2022). Implementing a combination of a harmonious environment for studies (Peixoto et al., 2021) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (Asani et al., 2022) could enhance positive academic emotions and help reduce academic procrastination.

Conclusion

To sum it up, the study sought to shed light on the experiences of grade 12 "balik-aral" students attending a public school in Cebu City, Philippines. The research revealed that these students felt the weight of their age difference from their classmates and the pressure to obtain a diploma. The study also discovered that a sense of belonging and being immersed in a highly educational environment were essential aspects of their experiences. The data analysis also revealed that the students faced different priorities and needed more resources. In addition, key stakeholders must provide adequate support to students with unique differences, which sets them apart from their peers. These differences require a distinctive and tailored approach to education, which must be taken into consideration by the relevant parties. Therefore, it is essential to implement the necessary measures to cater to those unique needs and provide a conducive learning environment. Failure to do so may result in suboptimal educational outcomes or even harm to the students in question.

The authors' study suggests that it is imperative for schools and key stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and various organizations, to examine the experiences of balik-aral students as they break their silence their quality of life, their lived experiences in school, and encounter challenges that have adversely impacted their current situation. It is, therefore, recommended that these stakeholders take a proactive approach to address the issues faced by the said students and work towards creating a supportive and conducive learning environment that can cater to their unique needs. This approach can enhance the academic and social outcomes of the students and

enable them to thrive in their educational pursuits. Furthermore, providing well-thought-out suggestions would be beneficial in addressing the issues of students returning to school.

The study's authors have developed recommendations to assist balik-aral students in achieving comfort in the school setting. The findings of the study suggest that the following measures can be taken to achieve this objective: (1) The guidance office is advised to develop a pre-orientation program tailored to returning students' needs to revitalize their academic skills. The program will help students to reacclimate themselves to the educational environment and refresh their knowledge base. A well-crafted program will provide returning students with the necessary tools to succeed academically and ensure a smooth transition into the school setting. (2) To help balik-aral students who cannot attend classes, the school should consider implementing a self-paced learning system. Students could work at their own pace and independently, allowing them to make up for any lost time in their studies. By providing this option, the school can help ensure that all students have access to quality education, regardless of their circumstances. Additionally, teachers will closely monitor the progress of balik-aral students to ensure that they complete all assigned tasks and master all the necessary competencies. (3) Parents of balik-aral students play a crucial role in their children's academic success. By being actively involved in their child's education, parents can provide a robust support system that can help boost their child's confidence and interest in learning. Whether it is through attending parent-teacher conferences, helping with homework, or encouraging their child to participate in extracurricular activities, parents can make a significant impact on their child's motivation to continue and finish their studies. With solid parental involvement, balik-aral students are more likely to excel academically and achieve their goals with flying colors. (4) Future scholars who want to study this topic can use a quantitative approach by focusing on the main themes that emerged from the study. They can also explore the quality of life, experiences, and challenges of grade 11 students who may need to adjust to their new environment. Additionally, including more key informants can provide more reliable and accurate information about the situation of Balik-Aral students

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