# Understanding student dropout risk: A qualitative study

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| | A qualitative study on understanding student dropout risk was developed due to the increasing number of students leaving school at Dalaguete National High School, Dalaguete, Cebu, Philippines, a problem that the school faces and probably the rest of high schools worldwide. The study used a qualitative approach in multiple cases, a non-probability sampling method, which is the purposive sampling to understand the life of the one hundred fifteen (115) determined grade 9 students dropout risk in the school, their families, and the community. It sought to determine the student's learning experiences and their influences on the participants' academic performance. The most common learning experiences of students at risk of dropping out coming from all the participants' learning experiences pointed out negative peer influences, coming from broken families, economic problems, and school factors that triggered tardiness and absenteeism to being demotivated to participate in all school learning activities. With these findings, an intervention program was proposed to bring back the students' motivation to stay in school and finish their studies. Completing this study benefitted not only the students but also the school and stakeholders. The researcher is hopeful that the study's outcomes will lead to continual research on dropout problems in the school, leading to ZERO dropout cases in all schools nationwide. |

## 1. Introduction

Global data on dropouts from 2000 - 2018 at the Junior High School level has declined from 30 percent to 16 percent (UNESCO, 2022). However, it is noticeable that the Philippines contributes to making Southern Asia 2nd in rank in terms of secondary dropout percentage, based on the data from the Department of Education from 2002 to 2013 (available data at DepEd website) is at 7 to 8 percent varying from decimal points in every year. Specifically, in Dalaguete National High School, Dalaguete, Cebu, Junior High School data of dropout rate from 2014 to 2021 has increased year by year from 3.23 to 4.7 with Grade 9 as the year level with the most dropout cases (2020 and 2021 data, Dalaguete National High School dropout is relatively low, and enrollment is very low, brought about by the pandemic). This school year, 2022 - 2023, the school's overall population has doubled compared to the past two years. With the trend of dropout rates before the pandemic, the researcher predicted that the school dropout rate would continue to rise at the onset of face-to-face classes. Therefore, with this cited problem of school dropouts, it is important and imperative to conduct a case study at Dalaguete National High among Grade 9 Junior High School for the school year 2022 - 2023 involving students that are at risk of dropping out to identify the

reasons and factors that influence their decision on leaving classes. If these reasons and factors were identified and understood and how they influenced decisions about dropping classes, an intervention program can be created and proposed for implementation.

Student at Risk of Dropping Out, or is commonly called SARDO, is the Philippines' Department of Education coined word which refers to a student who is most likely to become a dropout candidate. These students are prone to leave school within the school year and opt to wait to finish their studies. This situation has brought about the study of the problem to come out with the most objective causes of the school-leavers (students who drop out from school) to identify who these students at Dalaguete National High School, specifically at Grade 9, Junior High School who are at risk of dropping out to develop intervention plans for school administrators' effective and efficient school management system. The study pointed out peer influences, being a member of a broken family, economic problems, and school factors were the common learning experiences of the students, which led to poor academic performance to being demotivated in all school learning experiences, which resulted in dropout problems. The study developed an intervention and prevention program called project ReACH, which means to Reach All Children and identify all the students who are at risk of dropping out and preventing them from leaving school.

This study aims to assess the Students at Risk of Dropping Out (SARDO) at Dalaguete National High School, Grade 9 Students, during the school year of 2022 - 2023 as the basis for the proposed Intervention Program. It uses a qualitative approach in a multiple case study as it seeks to answer the research questions about what are the learning experiences of the participants? How do these learning experiences influence their academic performance? And what can be done to provide better learning experiences for the students' dropout risk (participants)?

## 2. Theoretical basis

This research study is anchored on Academic mediation theory which states that poor academic achievement is one of the strongest predictors of high school dropout (Gagnepain, 1960). This theory examines the mediation effect of poor academic achievement on other factors, such as deviant affiliation, personal deviance, family socialization, and structural strains, associated with school dropout. Essentially, it looks at how poor academic achievement interacts with and affects the relationship between high school dropout and other factors.

According to Gregorio (1976) as cited in Amamag-id (2011) understanding the child must be grounded upon knowing him as a biological organism with needs, abilities, and goals, identifying his social and psychological environment, and recognizing the cultural forces of which he is part of. These make up the diversity among learners in the classroom. The environment, which includes forces external to the student and internal and external to the school, has contributed to students' problems being risk of leaving school or dropping out. The school, family, church, recreation centers, peers, mass media, and community will affect learning as the student deals with them. The external environment is classified into two: the external physical environment and the social environment. The external environment is made up of all the many things in the world that affect us directly (as food does) and all the things that stimulate our organs (as sights and sounds do). The social environment includes all the human beings who in any way influence us by direct or indirect daily contact, such as our families, friends, schoolmates, classmates, and business acquaintances (Sevilla, Punsalan, Rovera, & Vindevil, 2006), and now recently included mass media and technology.

Another influencing factor that causes students to be at risk of dropping out is the students themselves. They make wrong decisions. They get involved with gangs, drugs/alcohol, get

pregnant, and commit crimes. Many have a poor school attitude and are frequently bored at school. They are disconnected from their families, school, and life. They do not know the reasons why they need to go to school. They are not involved in school activities and lack self-esteem. Some have been promoted lacking skills for promotion. Some have undergone major illnesses and have missed too many school days and have been informed that they will be held back. Because of the many conditions listed above, they have been suspended and have fallen behind in their work, and see little purpose in returning to school (Schargel, 2014).

Another influencing factor that affects students to be at risk of dropping out is the family they came from. There is often a clash between family values and those of the school. Frequently, their parents drop out of school themselves. The students come from low socio-economic backgrounds, where there are many children. Older children often must go to work to supply the family with much-needed funds for basic family needs or need to stay at home to take care of younger siblings so that their parents can work. Many children are the product of divorce, separation, or sometimes, family violence. They are not raised by parents, but rather by aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Families are not meeting some children's basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing (Schargel, 2014).

Another influencing factor that causes students to be at risk of dropping out is Lack of Parental support. The lack of parental involvement is a problem that often leads to dropout rates, especially among high school students. Parents play an important role when it comes to high school attendance. High school dropouts often have parents who aren't engaged or concerned with their academic success. If parents don't encourage their children to stay in school, show interest in classes and teachers, communicate with the administration, or pay attention to homework assignments, the children might not see any reason to follow through with the coursework. When parents don't prioritize their children's high school education, the child may choose to drop out (Tuck, 2014).

Another influencing factor that causes students to be at risk of dropping out is money. Some high school students drop out because they want to work to earn money. They may need money to buy clothes or electronic gadgets or to support their desires. Most students don't have time and energy to go to school all day, complete homework and still work enough hours to support their expenses. Dropouts who are concerned with their immediate, short-term financial situation may see a full-time job as the best way to maintain the lifestyle they desire (Tuck, 2014).

Another influencing factor that affects students to be at risk of dropping out is the school they attend. The schools are toxic to student learning, students, parents, and staff. Students are suspended for minor infractions (such as "talking back to the teacher") or placed in "remedial classes". The schools have a culture of low expectations. They lack adequate guidance and counseling. The curriculum is not relevant to the needs of the students being taught. Passive instructional strategies are being used without regard to the student's individual learning styles. Teachers are not trained in the latest teaching/learning/technology techniques (Schargel, 2014).

Calderon (1998) as cited in Amamag-id (2011) that the school is a very important factor in learning and development. Good schools can develop better than poor ones. He further identified three components that make the difference between good and poor schools. First, the Teachers. If the teachers are efficient and effective in the true sense of the word, the learners learn remarkably well than when teachers are inefficient and ineffective, in which case they suffer a setback. Second, Facilities. If the facilities are adequate and serviceable, the students learn well and progress rapidly; otherwise, the learners will be retarded in their learning.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. The design

The entire research plan is based on the concept of the right research methodology. The study utilized a qualitative approach in a multiple case study using an interview guide questionnaire to gather and interpret the data and findings. Qualitative research is used to understand how people experience the world (Bhandari, 2020). Hence, a qualitative approach is fitted in this study since it focuses on the experiences and opinions of the two groups of respondents. Moreover, the study further utilized multiple case studies using an interview semi-structured questionnaire in gathering and interpreting data and findings. A multiple case study in this sense is referred to understand the differences and the similarities between the cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995, as cited in Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, Sabir, & Waseem, 2016).

For this, multiple case studies are appropriate and fit in this study. Although it focused on a single subject pertaining to the students at risk of dropping out however, it sought to understand the many reasons and factors affecting the students at risk of dropping out as multiple cases to be addressed. Where, the findings of this study will be the basis for the school-initiated prevention and intervention programs. To do this, there is a need for in-depth analysis and interpretations of data gathered to be accurate in treating the problem.

Reflexivity involves examining your own judgments, practices, and belief systems during the data collection process (Delve & Limpaecher, 2022). The goal of being reflexive is to identify any personal beliefs that may have incidentally affected the research.

With this, the researcher, who is also a teacher and as an overall supervisor of my students, it is my duty and obligation to inspire them to value education. Thus, constant effort in my capacity as a teacher should be made to encourage students to stay in school and eventually become productive citizens economically and socially.

The challenge of zero dropouts or, at the very least, reduction of dropouts has brought me as a teacher into this endeavor to study students at risk of dropping out of SARDOs. The researcher, as an educator, considered dropout cases in the school to be a serious problem that will predicate problems in our economy and society as a whole. That is why, in my research, I took this study seriously in gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data for the students at risk of dropping out of SARDOs for the researcher to propose appropriate prevention and intervention programs to address the problem.

In this endeavor, I firmly believe Nelson Mandela's statement that "Education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world." This will only be true when I, as an educator, continue to inspire the students to stay in school. This will not only guarantee the future of the students but also guarantee a nation with productive citizens able to contribute to nation-building.

### 3.2. The environment

The study was conducted at Dalaguete National High School, Municipality of Dalaguete, Cebu. Located in the southern part of Cebu bounded by the Municipality of Argao going to north and Alcoy going to south.

Dalaguete National High School is located at the heart of the Poblacion area beside the barangay hall of Poblacion, and 50 meters away from the Municipal Hall of Dalaguete. It has an overall population of students of four thousand two hundred seventy-four (4,274), with one hundred forty-three (143) teaching and non-teaching personnel, including utility personnel and

security guards. It has a total land area of thirty-two thousand two hundred sixty-four (32,264) square meters. Dalaguete National High School is surrounded by establishments such as residential homes, food stalls, educational supplies stores, boarding houses, and internet cafes, and within walking distance to the public market and town plaza; the school is also a walking distance away from the shorelines. There are also many gaming activities near the school, such as billiard halls, tennis courts, basketball courts, volleyball courts, football fields, and many others. The school is in a rural area in one of the thirty-three (33) barangays in the municipality of Dalaguete. It is the largest school in the municipality in terms of the number of students, faculty and staff, and land area.

### 3.3. Participants

The selection of participants in qualitative research is purposeful (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Participants are selected based on who can provide an informative answer to the research questions and those who can enhance their understanding of the phenomenon under study (Kuper, Lingard, & Levinson, 2008). The study divided the participants into two (2) groups, which are the main participants, composed of all grade 9 students at risk of dropping out. This study focused on grade 9 students at Dalaguete National High School because as shown in the data for the last five years, the grade 9 year level got the biggest share of dropouts in Junior High School almost half of the dropout rate. And the other participants, which are the teacher-advisers of the SARDOs, parents/guardians, and the administrators, for the researcher believes their important role in the lives of the students. This study used purposive sampling since in selecting the participants were purposely selected using criteria to answer the problems.

The main participants must be enrolled in Dalaguete National High School for the school year 2022 - 2023. The main participants must be Grade 9 students. The main participants must be determined as SARDOs. In determining the students at risk of dropping out in grade 9, a guidance form will be used (DEPED ORDER no. 18, 2015, also known as Profiling and Initial Risk Assessment Tools for Childern) (DepEd Order, 2015). There were one hundred fifteen (115) participants with ages ranging from 13 - to 16; 93 of them were male, and 22 were female. The majority of them are within the poverty line, and others are below. The other participants must be parents/guardians of the main participants. For the teacher, they must be the present teacher-advisers of the main participants. As for the school administrators, they must be the present school administrators of Dalaguete National High School for the school year 2022 - 2023. After all participants had been determined, they were all scheduled for one-on-one interviews using the semi-structured interview guide to answer the research questions. Since the respondents were all minors, a parent's consent has been sent to parents asking them to allow their child to be interviewed by the researcher.

### 3.4. Research instrument

This research used a semi-structured interview guide to elicit responses from the study participants about the research questions. A semi-structured interview guide is a schematic presentation of questions or topics, which must be explored by the interviewer (Crabtree & DiCicco-Bloom, 2006). Interview guides achieve the purpose of exploring many respondents more systematically and comprehensively, as well as keeping the interview focused on the desired line of action and achieving optimum use of interview time (Crabtree & DiCicco-Bloom, 2006). Creswell and Poth (2016) explain that the questions in the interview guide make up the core questions and many related questions to the central questions.

The semi-structured interview guide questions for this study were validated and approved by the four (4) content and method experts from the Cebu Technological University, Argao Campus namely, Ariel Lucero Ramos, Ed. D., Ma. Cristilina Aradillos Montañez, Dev. Ed., Anesito Luzon Cutillas, Dev. Ed., and Teresita Cleopolda Birondo Sarile, Dev. Ed. The interview guide questions comprised twenty-two (22) questions made up of twenty-two (22) questions. The first eleven (11) questions are for the main participants (SARDO), and the other eleven (11) questions are for the other participants which are the Teacher-advisers, parents/guardians, and the administrators. Two (2) of these are under-opening, introductory, and transition questions, fourteen (14) are content questions, and six (6) are follow-up and closing questions.

### 3.5. Data gathering procedures

The methods of gathering data are important because the way this information collected is used and the explanations it can generate are determined by the methodology and analytical approach applied by the researcher (Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa, & Varpio, 2015). The most common data collection methods used in qualitative research are individual or group interviews, including focus groups, observation, and document review/ analysis (Sargeant, 2012). She added that these methods may be done alone or in combination. This research implored the Key Informant Interview (KII) and documentary analysis. A proper and careful data collection phase requires deciding who will do what, where, when, and how at the different stages of the research process; acknowledging the role of the researcher as an instrument of data collection; and carefully considering the context studied and the participants and informants involved in the research (Paradis, O'Brien, Nimmon, & Bandiera, 2016).

Prior to all the data gathering process, the researcher sought the needed permission from the Graduate School of the Cebu Technological University - Argao Campus to proceed with this research study. This was necessary to establish cooperation between the institution and the researcher. The research proposal was approved during the design hearing on September 16, 2022, via Zoom.

### Ethical considerations

To proceed with the data collection, on the same date, the researcher drafted a letter request informing the administration of the Dalaguete National High School of the study to be conducted in the school and included in the request letter permitting the researcher to conduct interviews of grade nine (9) students at risk of dropping out, their teacher-advisers, and the administrators themselves. With permission granted from the school principal, the researcher immediately continued to the determination of all grade nine (9) students at risk of dropping out using the guidance form 1 from the Department of Education also known as Initial assessment on children at risk (DepEd Order, 2015). Upon determining the ages of the main participants, the researcher is advised by the adviser of the research study to draft parental consent asking permission to conduct interviews of their student/child (main respondent of the study) as ethical considerations using the ethics principles of Creswell (2014), Amdur and Bankert (2011). As the researcher strictly followed these ethical considerations, it is further highlighted in the letter of consent to parents that the interview would be purely voluntary and not a part of and would not affect the grades of the child. The parental consent also expressed that the data which will be collected would be treated with utmost confidentiality and would be used for this study only. It also further notified that the interview would not bring any harm to the student but would only give favorable results to the child. After the parent's consent had been approved, the next step of the study was to schedule each participant for a series of interviews - the main participants, which are the students themselves, and the other group of participants, which are the parents/guardians, teacher-advisers, and the administrators.

### *3.6. Data analysis*

From the transcribed data, the researcher picked out the themes that stood out from the responses for each research question. Thematic Analysis (TA) is used to analyze classifications and present patterns, or themes related to the data (Alhojailan, 2012). Hence, in this research, the author input the thematic data into a separate table and these themes were then categorized. The themes and categories picked from the responses were then analyzed. After this, the findings of the study were drawn to satisfy the research questions. The thematic analysis used has six steps.

### *Step 1: Data familiarization*

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the first step of the thematic analysis is "to familiarize yourself with the data". In familiarizing the data, the researcher must be very quick in transcribing the information given by the respondents. For without the written data, it would be difficult to familiarize them since familiarization involves reading and re-reading your data to become intimately familiar with its contents. The researcher considers the first step in thematic analysis as a front gate to have a good entrance in doing qualitative research using thematic analysis. More so, in this study, the collection of learning experiences of the main participants seconded by the other group of participants was recorded. All answers were screened for possible themes to move on to the next step of thematic analysis.

### *Step 2: Generate initial codes*

The second step for the thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006) is "to generate initial codes". This step entails generating initial codes that identify important information in the data which may be relevant in answering the research questions. The researcher did the coding by taking notes on the transcript and the other way by using a table in a Word document with written research questions on each row of the table for a clearer review of potential themes. Once the researcher has coded the entire dataset, he collates together all the codes and all relevant data extracts/sections that fit in each code for later analysis stages. In this step, the researcher highlighted the data/information that are relevant in answering the research questions, which are the learning experiences of the main respondents, factors that push such learning experiences, and the suggestions coming from the two group respondents. After all these relevant data are coded, the thematic analysis is ready for the third step.

### *Step 3: Searching for themes*

The third step of the thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is "the search for themes". In this step, the researcher examined all the codes and the collated data extracts to identify patterns among them and sort them into broader patterns of meaning (potential themes). The researcher looked through all the codes and their associated extracts and combined related codes into broader themes that tell which something is helpful about the data. Most of the time, the researcher combined several codes into a single theme. This step gave a clear picture of the findings of the study for it is useful in the treatment of the problems being asked by the study.

### *Step 4: Review for potential themes*

The fourth step in the thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) is "to review for potential themes". This step involved checking and refining the themes developed in step 3 to ensure they are useful and provide an accurate representation of the data. In this step of the analysis, data collection has almost been completed, and the researcher is on the way to defining the research paper to provide better conclusions and recommendations.

### Step 5: Define and name themes

The fifth step in the thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) is "to define and name themes". This step involves a detailed analysis of each of the final list of themes by describing what the theme is about, what is interesting about the theme, and why it is interesting. The researcher has defined the exact meaning of each theme; he has identified which "story" the theme tells (its scope and focus) and how this "story" relates to other themes to the research questions. After defining the themes, the researcher must come up with a succinct and easily understandable name for each theme. In this step of the analysis, data collection has been completed and the researcher can now provide better conclusions and recommendations.

### Step 6: Produce the final report

The final step, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is "to produce the final report". This allows the reader to evaluate the quality of your research and enhance its validity. Next, you should provide a summary of the findings. Use the description of your themes in Step 5 as the basis for the final report. Themes are presented, and also use quotes from what the participants said to demonstrate your findings for each theme. However, use pseudonyms to conceal their identities. If you have multiple research objectives or questions, organize your themes by research question or objective. Lastly, write a conclusion explaining the main takeaways and how the analysis answered the research questions.

### 3.7. Trustworthiness of the study

The researcher in this study used the evaluative Criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985). These evaluative criteria consist of the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study.

- *Credibility*

To maintain and achieve the credibility of the study, persistent observation, honesty in informants and validity of data generation and interpretation are the important things to consider in getting the credibility of research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). With this, in the process of data generation, the researcher went into a persistent observation of the data collected through the series of question-and-answer techniques to come up with the most relevant data needed in the study. These mentioned important points to undergo are done to establish valid research findings based on the original information generated from honest informants: the SARDOs, Teachers, Parents, and Administrators.

- *Transferability*

Part of the evaluative criteria is the transferability of the study. With this, thick description of research environment and thick description of participants are important factors to consider in the transferability of research study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this, the researcher established a thorough description of the environment where the study is grounded. It involved defining the circumstances that surround the school premises, the environment of the main respondents where he/she lived, and the community involvement, including the description of the research environment. Thick description of the participants involved the profiling of the main respondents and the other respondents where questions were asked about his/her family, socio-economic status, marital status of parents, and many others related to describing the main respondent's environment. With this, research findings would be transferable by providing readers with evidence that the research study's findings could be applicable to other contexts, situations, times, and populations.

- *Dependability*

Another part of the evaluative criteria is the dependability of the study. For this, a detailed description of the methodological procedures and detailed description of the operational detail of data gathering and evaluation of the effectiveness of the process are important factors to consider in the dependability of research study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher finds it important because this supports the consistency and reliability of the research findings and the degree to which research procedures are documented, allowing someone outside the research to follow, audit, and critique the research process (Sandelowski, 1986, as cited in Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams, & Blackman, 2019). In this study, methodological procedures were clearly defined to secure the systematic flow of the data gathering.

- *Confirmability*

Another part of the evaluative criteria is the confirmability of the study. For this, a detailed methodological description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is the best method for the objectivity of research during data collection and data analysis. There needs to be congruency between two or more independent persons about the accuracy, relevance, or meaning of the data (Polit & Beck, 2012). The researcher emphasizes the importance of the research study confirmability, for it demonstrates the quality of its findings. The researcher let his study be evaluated and commented on by reliable experts in the process of completing the research paper.

## 4. Result and discussion

### 4.1. Result

This study aimed to determine the underlying factors affecting the Grade 9 students at risk of dropping out based on their learning experiences, affecting their academic performance. In doing so, the researcher can help to effectively address the SARDO case in Dalaguete National High School through intervention and prevention programs.

The first table shows the learning experiences of the participants of the study which reflect five themes with corresponding categories for each of these themes. To answer research question number 1.

**Table 1**

Learning experiences of the main participants

| Themes | Categories |
|---|---|
| Deviant peer affiliation influence | Influence on gaming activities<br>Influence on vices |
| Personal deviance | Tardiness<br>Absenteeism |
| Family factor of broken family | Living together with grandparents<br>Living with relatives<br>Living with mother's side<br>Living with father's side |
| Structural strains on socio-economic status | Lack of financial support<br>Parents/Guardians irregular job |
| Other (school factor) | Too strict teachers<br>Too difficult school works |

Under deviant peer affiliation, the learning experience that is common is the influence of their peers on negative influences on gaming activities and vices. Under personal deviance, the dominant answers were tardiness and absenteeism. On the family factor, the common learning experience in many of them came from broken families. Some of them were living together with their grandparents, others with their mother and a few with their father, few of them were with their relatives. On structural strains, the dominant learning experience that affected their academic performance is the socioeconomic factor, which is a lack of financial support and irregular jobs of parents/guardians. Other learning experiences that affected their academic performance were too strict teachers and too-difficult schoolwork from the school factor.

The second table shows the influence of the learning experiences of the participants that resulted in poor academic performance, which would answer research question number 2.

**Table 2**

Influences of the learning experience on the academic performance of the participants

| Themes | Categories |
|---|---|
| Personal demotivation | Peer deviant influence<br>Low moral support |
| Family demotivation | Low parental supervision<br>Lack of financial support |
| School demotivation | Teachers' attitude<br>Types of schoolwork |

The learning experiences mentioned in Table 1 of the main participants had led them to be demotivated to participate in all school learning activities. Moreover, these were the categories that led the main participants to being demotivated in participating in school learning activities - Peer deviant influence, Low moral support, low parental supervision, lack of financial support, teachers' attitude in the class, and the types of schoolwork and activities.

Research question number 3: What can be done to provide better learning experiences for the main participants? To answer this question, the researcher has formulated a framework based on the findings from research questions number 1 and 2 paired with an intervention program to provide better learning experiences for the main participants.

Research question number one (1) shows the learning experiences of the participants that influenced their academic performance, which are the experiences of their peers, personal, family, structural strains, and of the school. Research question number two (2) shows the influence of being demotivated personally, by their family and school. With these findings, the researcher was able to formulate an intervention program which is called project ReACH, which means reach for all children.

### 4.2. Discussion

The findings and results of this study are indeed the highlights of this study. For this, it is important to analyze them and thoroughly be discussed for the participants of this study be understood and can be given proper intervention program.

**Learning experiences of the participants**

The learning experiences of the participants of the participants show deviant peer affiliation, personal deviance, being a member of a broken family, socio-economic status and school factors played as reasons that cannot be taken for granted that need to carefully be addressed to give better learning experiences of the participants to stay in school and finish studies.

**Deviant peer affiliation**

Deviant peer affiliation, as one of the factors to consider, gave the participants negative learning experiences that somehow led them to be de-motivated in their life in school. Mark and Leo (not their real name) during the one-on-one interview were clear examples of students who were influenced by the wrong peer group from which, in this study, they were determined as students at risk of dropping out. These were the learning experiences of the deviant peer affiliation, which, if not provided with appropriate interventions, will lead to these students to dropout and thereby an addition to the school problems.

**Personal deviance**

Personal Deviance is also a factor to be addressed. According to the participants, personally, they lack the motivation to go to school, which leads them to be absent and cut classes. In this way, there is a need to find ways for the parents and school, and other stakeholders to light the fire of the participant's desire to go to school.

**Family learning experience**

Family constitutes the most influential agent among the different social factors, which affect the growth and development of a child (Chenge, Chenge, & Maunganidze, 2017). Being a member of a broken family had a great influence on the participants to be demotivated in school life.

**Structural strains**

The socio-economic status of the participants was also of great effect on staying motivated to be in school; with enough financial support financially in school, according to the participants, will really help them accomplish tasks in school.

**School learning experience**

The school itself is a factor to consider in the participants' motivation. The teachers and the workloads they give to the students matter also to be motivated in their studies. Thus, if teachers are not well competent and workloads of the participants were too hard to accomplish, then its hard for them to continue.

**Influences of the learning experiences on their academic performance**

The learning experiences came from deviant peer affiliation, personal deviance, family experiences, socio-economic status, and school learning experiences were all lead to the participants to be failing in all their academic endeavors. Thus, according to this study, if all their negative experiences will not be addressed dropout problems will continue to rise.

**Proposed provision of better learning experience**

This part of the discussion is based on the answers and findings on the suggested ways in which they can have better learning experiences.

The researcher has formulated a conceptual framework to provide the process that would lead to the formulation of the intervention program. This conceptual framework will be paired with

the output of the study, which is crafted and implemented in an intervention program at Dalaguete National High School to provide a better learning experience to all students, particularly the students at risk of dropping out.

Basically, this first part of the framework was to expose all the factors that resulted in the demotivating learning experiences of the participants, which were found in the findings of research questions 1 and 2. In this study, the factors resulting in the demotivating learning experiences of the participants were deviant peer affiliations, personal factors, family factors, structural strains on socioeconomic status, and school factors. All these learning experiences made the main participants demotivated to participate in all learning activities in the school, which resulted in poor academic performance. Thus, there is a need to provide an intervention program to address these situations because if these problems are left unattended would result in more and more dropout cases, leading to many problems in the future. Furthermore, the researcher has crafted a particular intervention program called "ReACH" to address the many cases surrounded by students at risk of dropping out. This program is patterned from the RAMON ABOITIZ FOUNDATION INC. CENTER FOR LEADERS (RAFI-CFL) template for a project proposal.

Project ReACH is a proposed intervention program for Dalaguete National High School, which mainly aims to address the needs and concerns of all students, especially those at risk of dropping out. Project ReACH is an adaptation project from the Department of Education to reduce dropout cases in school. This project means Reach for All Children (ReACH) to reach and keep them, stay in school, and graduate. This is a series of stakeholders' forums that includes the parents, advisers of SARDOs, administrators, Municipal Mayor/LGU representative, Barangay Captain/Barangay representative, PNP chief of Dalaguete Police Station/representative, and other stakeholders (if necessary). This forum tackles the needs and concerns of students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders to actively engage and share the responsibility to attain the desired outcome of this project: ZERO dropouts in school. This project will benefit the following: Direct beneficiaries are the students, especially those who are at risk of dropping out, for they will be provided better learning experiences in school, family, and community. Indirect beneficiaries are Parents - they will directly benefit from their children's success. Teachers - it will be less burdensome if all stakeholders collaborate to educate the students. Administrators - A ZERO or Lower dropout rate will mean good governance in a school. Community - well-educated people in the community will mean a productive community, a productive municipality, and a productive country.

## 5. Conclusions & recommendations

### 5.1. Conclusion

The qualitative case study on the factors affecting the students at risk of dropping out was developed due to the increasing incidents of students leaving school in the Dalaguete National High School recently and in the past five (5) years. The study focuses on the Grade nine (9) year level, where dropout cases dominated the other year levels. The study determined to understand the life of the students in the school, their families, and the community (outside the school and family. Moreover, it primarily sought to find conclusive answers to the questions with regards to their learning experiences, how these learning experiences affected their academic performance, and what the stakeholders can do to provide better learning experiences to the lives of our students in school, in their family, and the community.

Among all the learning experiences of the participants, the dominant result of these learning experiences leads to tardiness and absenteeism. How did these learning experiences affect their

academic performance? These learning experiences caused them to be demotivated in all the learning activities in the school and somehow, if not treated, would lead them to drop out.

Completing this study benefitted the students and the students at risk of dropping out, and the stakeholders themselves (parents, teachers, school, and community members). It is hoped that continual research on the dropout problem in the school, for as time passes, the factors affecting the students to drop out will also evolve depending on the evolutions of the education system and the community as well.

### *5.2. Recommendations*

The researchers are convinced that the problems of this study were answered thoroughly, with accuracy and reliability. Nevertheless, aspects of the research study can still be improved and provide more substantial and more accurate results and conclusions for a better intervention program.

With this, the researchers recommend the following:

Better data, results, and conclusions can be produced if all respondents cooperate in the data-gathering process. The researcher admits that the number of respondents for this study is relatively small compared to the actual count of the primary respondents targeted in the data-gathering process within the school. It is recommended that for a similar study, more samples from the population should be asked and urged to participate in the study. More findings may arise if the evaluation is done per year level on the school campus.

The accuracy of the subject's evaluation depends on the availability and reliability of collected data. The interviews may need to be more accurate due to the researcher's time, and respondents were very limited due to the misalignment of available vacant time. The researcher recommends that, instead of a qualitative study using a single case study, quantitative research, through a survey, be used to collect data on the subject matter, for this will be answered during respondents' convenience time without compromising the schedule of classes from the researcher and of the respondents. The survey should provide more statements or reasons, exposing more exciting aspects of the problem and other areas of concern.

Moreover, the researcher also recommends further study of the intervention and prevention programs after their implementation in the school. Hence, evaluation of the intervention and prevention programs is necessary to obtain the actual results of the programs. The researcher also recommends a separate study to determine whether the implemented intervention and prevention programs were effective.

To maximize the implementation of the intervention and prevention programs, the researcher recommends that the school administration implement this at the year level of grade 9 students and at the other year levels. Then, it would be of more significant help, as more beneficiaries would likely be served.

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