

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF THE STUDENTS IN SPECIAL PROGRAM IN JOURNALISM (SPJ): A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

Excell V. Balinas, Dhan Timothy M. Ibojo

Graduate Studies Department, Master of Arts in Education- Major in English Language Teaching, Assumption College of Nabunturan- Poblacion, Nabunturan, Davao de Oro, Philippines, 8800

ABSTRACT

The creation of the Special Interest Programs of the Department of Education such as Special Program in Journalism was in response to meet the special learning needs of the students. The goal of this qualitative phenomenological research was to explore the experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and suggestions of the students enrolled in the Special Program in Journalism of Compostela National High School. Data and information were gathered using in-depth interviews. The 12 selected students enrolled in the academic year 2022-2023 were the participants of the study. The findings showed that the challenges encountered by the students include stress and pressure in meeting writing standards, problem with time management, low self-confidence, overflowing tasks and activities, and lack of resources and facilities. The mechanisms utilized by students to overcome these challenges include doing constant practice, avoiding negative thoughts, turning mistakes into motivations, interacting people with the same interest, and setting timetable. The findings also revealed that both teachers and students lack trainings and seminars. Thus, to address these concerns, an intervention program named as 'Project JoG (Journalism on the Go)' was developed to enhance the journalistic skills of the students, and improve the teaching methods of the teachers. This paper concluded with the recommendation that the findings from the students' experiences will assist school administrators and curriculum designers in determining the improvement programs that should be included in the Special Program in Journalism as well as the activities required to help students develop their skills and talents. Additionally, training on the integration of journalism across all learning areas must be given to all SPJ teachers to capacitate them with the techniques on how to integrate journalism in all subjects.

Keyword: *special program in journalism, challenges, coping mechanisms, suggestions, intervention program, phenomenological research*

1. INTRODUCTION

As a discipline that relies heavily on language as its instruments and requires a tight relationship with the linguistic medium of its transactions, campus journalism plays a significant role in education. In today's world, Bulusan (2016) stressed that there have been drastic changes in the field of journalism due to technological revolutions making antiquated methods no more room in teaching especially in a class where students are exposed in the field of mass communication, print, online and broadcast media. However, problems such as lack of books, qualified teachers with background in Journalism, and facilities which can suffice the need of the learners came into the scene. These problems can somehow affect the performance of the students.

In India, as stressed by Sinha and Basu (2020), a significant problem associated with journalism education in the country is the lack of symbiosis between the educators, learners, and policymakers towards providing the impetus for learning. The intended plan of the government for the program is not congruent with the budget being released. This results in a lack of materials and training for both teachers and students.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) implemented the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) to hone the journalistic skills and competencies of student writers and teachers, and to give assurance for the

involved to commit and perform shared responsibilities in the attainment of program goals. The program was implemented on a pilot basis in identified secondary schools but not all schools responded because of the mere fact that DepEd's intended budget for the program is far from what the curriculum needs ("17 High Schools," 2009).

In Compostela National High School (CNHS), teachers receive less training in journalism due to the fact that aside from SPJ, the school also offers other special programs such as Science, Technology and Engineering (STE), Special Program in the Arts (SPA) and Special Program in Sports (SPS). The intended budget for each program is not enough to suffice all the needs of both teachers and students. Aside from that, students are given different options to which program they would enrol, which only result in competition among the special programs. Moreover, what saddens the situation is that majority of the students in SPJ are students who did not qualify for STE. These situations somehow affect the performance of the school at the National Schools Press Conference (NSPC) since most of the student writers are coming from SPJ.

This study, therefore, seeks to describe the experiences of the students in the program to extract the meaning of campus journalism in their lives. Past studies mentioned mainly the associations of journalism experiences with the academic performances of the students. However, studies about the lived experiences of the students enrolled in SPJ have not been administered. Further, this can provide relevant concepts that would possibly support the academic community.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of the research participants that are valuable in their journey as students in the Special Program in Journalism?
2. What are the challenges commonly encountered by the participants in the Special Program in Journalism?
3. How do the participants cope with the challenges experienced in the Special Program in Journalism?
4. What are the suggestions/recommendations of the students to improve the program?
5. What intervention program can be crafted from the findings of the study?

1.2 Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored on Michael Fullan's Change Theory. He proposed this theory in 1982. This theory emphasized that like business organizations, schools must be aware of the changing needs of their "clients", and must be willing to change their systems as a means of meeting those needs. This theory focused on the individuals participating in the change process and the use of methods to assist leaders in promoting educational change to positively influence student achievement.

Fullan believed that change is inevitable in the education system as a result of research, leadership, and policy. As teachers are central to educational change and change is inevitable for any organization that wants to move forward, teachers need to be prepared to manage any changes that come their way. Fullan pointed out that to deal with such complexity is not to control the change, but to guide it.

As the study focused on the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of the students in the Special Program in Journalism, this served as bases for intervention programs and changes for the improvement of the SPJ program.

In furtherance, majority of the researches that involves campus journalism focus only on the grammar or how effective the journalism program in improving the writing skills of the students, thus there has been limited inquiry on the lived experiences of the students under the program.

1.3 Delimitations of the Study

The focus of this study was to explore the experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms and suggestions of the Special Program in Journalism students of Compostela National High School, Compostela, Davao de Oro. However, the participants are delimited to the 12 selected SPJ learners who are enrolled in the Academic Year 2022-2023.

In furtherance, the study did not measure the effectiveness of the program but gathered the experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms and suggestions of the selected SPJ learners. Results were not generalizable considering the number of participants. For the data gathering, in-depth interview was utilized.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Campus press has been deemed important because of its significant influence on the thoughts and actions of the students. Thus, theories, concepts, published articles of personal testimonies, and various works of literature relevant to this study are discussed in this section to provide strong frame of references. For a clear presentation, Thematic Approach is used.

2.1 Learners' Experiences in Journalism Class

Phillips (2017) stressed that journalism provides students a chance to create something that they have ownership of and build on that. If students feel that they have created the assignment from top to bottom, they will be more invested in seeing it succeed, which will drive a thirst for learning and improvement.

In a qualitative research study conducted by Omay (2016), the twelve former campus journalists of Placido L. Señor National High School arrived to a conclusion that exposure to campus journalism promotes life-long learning, which enhances both academic and life skills essential to the lives of the students' future endeavor in college studies, at work and to students' personhood throughout life for learning's significance cuts across different fields. Omay also stated that from the campus journalism experiences, the skills, and competencies that campus journalists have found are significant to their lives and onwards especially the grammar, strategic rules and discourse competencies, journalistic skills, social and life skills on flexibility, leadership, hardwork, and persistence.

Lin (2013), a student journalist, interviewed Andrea Gillhooley, a 2005 student journalist awardee from Penn State University, via Twitter about her experiences in the workplace and her thoughts on journalism education. Gillhooley wrote that she trains herself on how to use social media to convey stories live. She uses blogs, online chats, and websites to do her research and collects her notes in an online notebook. Classes should practice writing breaking news, including Twitter, facebook, instagram, and other live blogging tool. Bacon (2011) suggests that journalism educators should let the students produce journalism content rather than academic research so they can practice their craft.

Ruffolo (2017) mentioned a former campus journalist and National Schools Press Conference (NSPC) recipient way back 2004 who now became a school paper adviser and an inspirational coach to his campus journalists in his article entitled "Former Campus Scribe inspires to Succeed."

Another news article narrated two sisters' stories of being campus journalists who both became Outstanding Campus Journalists in the NSPC- Trisha Marie Lopina in 2016 and Earl Joy Lopina in 2017. The two are now Senior High School students, and by the time they will attend universities, scholarship grant awaits them.

Dvorak (2008), in his report entitled "High School Journalism Matters," finds positive connection between high school journalism and academic achievement. It shows that high school journalism experiences have a favourable effect on both overall college grade and grade in college courses. For students with high school journalism experience, the first year college grade point average was 2.80, compared with 2.73 for their non-journalism counterparts. In English courses, the journalism-experienced group had a 3.05 grade point average, compared with 2.94 for non-journalism students. As to college entrance examination, the research reveals that students with high school newspaper or yearbook experience scored higher in the American College Testing (ACT) Composite, English and Reading, but lower in ACT Math and Science. The results were the same in 1987, with two exceptions: the ACT Reading score, which was not included in the earlier research, and the ACT Science score. Another finding of this research concludes that students exposed in high school campus journalism are more active in extracurricular activities in college. Dvorak said that student journalists are more active in student government, special interest clubs, dramatic and theatre troupes, religious groups, and political organizations than the non-journalism counterparts. They are also more involved in school and community service organizations.

Esther Kang, Chicagomag.com editor, told to Dvorak that students exposed in the field of journalism are a little bit more critical thinker and smarter of viewing situations compared to those who have no exposure. Tim Chapman, Editor-in-Chief, The Breeze of James Madison University, sees the significance of journalism background in high school to his writing skill advancement and writing motivation in college. Moreover, Kent State University Knight Chair in Scholastic Journalism Mark Goodman believes the significant relationship between academic performance and having a student newspaper in school especially this day and age.

Moreover, according to a study by Alcott (2017) at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, students who receive encouragement from their professors are more likely to continue their education after the age of 16 than students who do not receive the same support. According to the study, a teacher's positive reinforcement has a considerably bigger effect on students. These students more frequently completed high school and pursued college degrees when they said they had received positive comments from their teachers. The same effect in the

Special Program in Journalism. Students who received commendation to the teachers will be motivated to do good and performed well.

Also, since Socrates, seminars and training have been employed as a teaching strategy because of their effectiveness in including students in the teaching and learning process, claims Bates (2016). Instead of giving students explicit instruction, Socrates posed scenarios and questions that force them to engage in critical thinking and analysis. By integrating their experience, identity, and beliefs into the teaching and learning process, students are seen as active participants in the creation of reality and the pursuit of truth. Additionally, organizing special training and press conferences is the most prevalent culture in newspapers and in a journalism program, according to Dela Rosa, Lucero, and Vargas' study from 2021. Their study's main objective is to describe university media cultures and how they may effect on the campus journalists.

2.2 Learners' Challenges in Journalism Class

Journalism has been facing challenges worldwide due to the development of technologies, financial, and economic crisis. Since then, media institutions, particularly in developed countries, have come under pressure to adjust to the new realities. More importantly, however, this new global reality poses important challenges on board. Thus, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) attempted to set standards based on good practice internationally, as a resource on which stakeholders around the world can draw in order to improve the quality of journalism in different countries (Banda, 2013).

Moreover, journalism education has been through a time of massive change over the past 20 years as Frost (2019) emphasized that as the media has got to grips with the technology revolution, learning how to deal with the benefits and problems that the move from analog to digital has brought. Now education needs to look to the future to predict what is coming and to prepare teachers and students for even more change as the interface between humans and the digital world becomes ever closer. Journalism education also needs to take more seriously the need to not just train journalism students but to give them the tools to deal with a fast-moving world where things can change almost month by month.

In journalism class, according to Anyiendah (2017) lack of students' interest is a major challenge. Developing journalistic skills is always challenging especially when it comes to writing. Many students zone out because they need to know may aspects such as punctuations, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and sentence structure to produce a good piece of work.

Further, Inquirer.net young blood columnist Sebastianne (2017) mentioned situations in the campus in which one could say students are no longer interested to reading printed materials. School publications are tagged as "boring." Lack of exposure to books and reading materials is indeed a problem behind. According to Muhammad Fareed et al (2016) many students find it very challenging to get enough and significant source of information. Lack of intensive reading will not help the students to write good sentences or paragraphs. This is because reading and writing are interrelated. If the students are not reading books or other reading materials, they are going to have lack of ideas and vocabulary to write.

Bell (2007) in her thesis on *Experiential Learning in Journalism Education* stressed that teaching Journalism in tertiary presents challenges, including how students learn to work in teams under the sort of pressure that characterizes workplace journalism. Bell's thesis is a case study of how a group of students at AUT University in Auckland, experienced taking responsibility for producing four editions of a student newspaper as part of their journalism training. The realities of life as a student journalist, including recognizing the frequent need to prune, tighten or re-angle stories, and the vital role of cooperative teamwork, unparalleled in their other journalism studies, were driven home. The case study suggests that while there are contrived aspects that cannot replicate a real newsroom, the learning experience resulted not only in advances in the students' technological skills but significant development in their critical thinking about the profession they were due to enter.

According to Pascoe, Hetrick, and Parker's (2020) study on the effects of stress and pressure on students in secondary school and higher education, the stress and pressure caused by academics have an adverse effect on students' mental and physical health and can result in a variety of academic problems. Liu (2015) found that academic pressure in Grade 10 positively predicted a lack of motivation in Grade 12 and negatively predicted intrinsic academic motivation among 298 Chinese secondary school students. This suggests that reducing academic pressure may help students maintain their inherent enthusiasm for learning (Liu and Lu, 2011).

Goldstein and Keller (2015) found that students tended to attribute culture shock to differences in the external environment which includes language, communication, and surroundings rather than to internal affective or cognitive factors such as poor stress management, identity confusion, or prejudice. The tendency to attribute culture shock to internal causes was greater for those with higher levels of cultural competence.

Thus, according to Triola (2003), some of the issues faced by students in journalism programs can be attributed to their inability to effectively carry out and regulate the procedures that underlie competent planning, composing, and revising their work. The reflective process, which is the capacity to assess one's own work as well as that of peers, is a key component of quality in journalism.

2.3 Learners' Coping Mechanisms in Journalism Class

Researches on academic stress according to Frieri (2020) have emphasized the importance of coping strategies in preventing harmful consequences. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in discovering the extent to which individuals are able to combine different coping strategies in writing. However, studies using these strategies are still scarce in the academic context.

In a study on the writing anxiety among Indonesian EFL college students conducted by Wahyuni (2019), the sources of writing anxiety are problems with topic choice, linguistic difficulties, and lack of writing practice. The coping strategies used by students to overcome writing anxiety are preparation, positive thinking, relaxation, and peer-seeking. It was found that the level of students' writing anxiety ranged from medium to high, with the majority in the medium level and none in the low level. Factors causing writing anxiety were dominated by evaluation apprehension followed by stress apprehension, and product apprehension. Referring to the findings, it is imperative for writing teachers to implement assessment or evaluation strategies which facilitate learning. Teachers are also encouraged to create a less tense atmosphere in writing class that no student resorts to resignation as their way to cope with their anxiety.

The result of the study of Wu and Lin (2016) on learning strategies in alleviating English writing anxiety for English Language Learners (ELLs) with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) revealed that there is no significant association between learning strategies and English writing anxiety. The common learning strategies utilized by participants were compensation, social, memory, and mixed strategies. The interview data indicated that ELLs suffered considerably from writing anxiety. Coping strategies used by highly anxious ELLs in the six learning groups, fourteen participants listened to music, six watched movies, and four attempted to avoid anxiety. These findings confirmed the research results of Woodrow (2005) that language learners with limited oral proficiency tend to watch television as a coping measure. Likewise, listening to music and watching movies were the two most common coping strategies employed by the mixed-group. Therefore, listening to music and watching movies were the two most common coping strategies of all highly anxious ELLs in the six learning groups.

Prensky (2001) stressed that learners today are digital natives which the educational system has tried to adjust to. Thus, the research of Moir (2014) examined how three coping strategies could support students in Further Education who have difficulties expressing themselves both written and oral. The first strategy is the ABC Chain Analysis which encourages students who either Self-harm or had emotional outbursts to reflect on how to respond differently. The second strategy is a Happy Bag and Music. Students identified objects and downloaded music that reminded them of happier times. The third strategy, the Safety Plan, is a detailed, individual plan of safe places, people, and experiences for the participants. Peer pressure and relationship difficulties mostly affected the group. Findings concluded that all three strategies were effective methods to support students, with the Happy Bag proving the most popular. Arguably, the Chain Analysis and Safety Plan are more cognitive than practical, and may be more effective for students who do not have learning difficulties, but further research would be required. The group reported that being able to empower themselves to cope with difficult situations was very helpful. These findings have proved useful for colleagues' professional development in supporting students. Moreover, it suggests that teachers should consider Students' Health and Wellbeing as outlined by *Experiences and Outcomes* (2003) in the context of the Curriculum for Excellence.

Similar to how mistakes are seen as normal components of learning processes by Kafer and Kuger (2018), it has been demonstrated that dealing with student errors in a helpful and constructive manner enhances students' motivation and academic achievement. Conversely, making mistakes in the classroom is both a personal and a social occurrence; as a result, coping with mistakes should be regarded as both a student-level and a classroom-level competency. Thus, the study's findings suggest that how individuals and groups of students view handling mistakes has a variety of implications for their motivational and cognitive learning outcomes.

On the other hand, laughter is a complicated emotional reaction to one's surroundings, situations, and stimuli, according to Louie, Brook, and Frates (2016) in the American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine. Although it had been researched for a long time, it was not until Norman Cousins' 1979 publication of *Anatomy of an Illness* that it was widely acknowledged as having any sort of curative impact. In the book, Cousins wrote that his enclosing spondylitis discomfort was reduced by laughter. Since then, both in popular culture and in academic study, where

the area of psychoneuroimmunology works to understand the effects of laughing on physiology and psychology, there has been a rise in interest in laughter as a viable therapeutic alternative.

Further, Panigrahi (2023) claims that organizing homework, projects, and assignments, as well as getting ready for exams, can be a stressful chore for many young pupils. Because they cannot allocate enough time to each subject's topic, students frequently choose to prepare in the last minute, which not only results in a failing grade but also hinders their capacity to study. Understanding the value of time and using it wisely to concentrate on the objective enables one to accomplish much more with much less effort.

2.4 Learners' Suggestions in Journalism Class

Preparing an environment that everyone can develop a strong shared framework to situate experiences into a meaningful learning is important. Today's journalism students as stressed by Reinardy (2010) are learning in a time in which new technology innovations have become a prominent part of the journalism industry. Hence, journalism classes should be taught in lieu of this change. With this, it is important to know the opinions of the learners on how to improve journalism classes.

In a study conducted by Stephanie Daniels (2012) entitled "Young Journalists Today: Journalism Students' Perceptions of the Ever-Evolving Industry," millennials of today have given teachers the hint to teach them in a more creative and current approach. Among these technological teaching tools they suggested are online discussions, social media, and blogs. This generation prefers that their teachers provide instant feedback, interactivity and gaming, creating and sharing content, staying connected via cellphones and providing visuals instead of text.

An in-depth audience study in Madison, Wisconsin revealed new conceptions of news that warrant a reconceptualization of journalism schools' curricula. In this research conducted by Sue Robinson (2012) entitled "Teaching Journalism as Process: A Proposed Paradigm for J-School Curricula in the Digital Age" stressed that viewpoints of the learners are needed in discussing the quagmire of making journalism schools relevant in a digital-age environment especially in positioning the learners' experiences to the curriculum's core. It employs an experiential learning model as an appropriate guide for a new kind of curricula for journalism schools.

In a study of Richard Brian Tutor (2021) on the Development and Evaluation of Learning Module for Special Program in Journalism, he emphasized that students mentioned the importance of modules. As defined by Right (2018), modules are learning materials used to support student learning. It was emphasized also in an article by Aspen Institute (2018) entitled "Improving Access to High Quality Instructional Materials" that teachers who have access to engaging and high-quality instructional materials, tend to have greater impact in elevating the achievement of the students.

The 2011 Annual Survey of Journalism and Mass Communication graduates conducted by the University of Georgia, gave greater details about how well prepared today's graduates are for the workplace. According to Becker, Vlad and Kalpen (2012), surveys were returned from 2,195 students from 82 schools listed in the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication school directory. More than 70 percent of those surveyed said they felt they had the skills to write for the web, edit for the web, and use social media professionally. Very few said they had learned web animation and mobile-device content creation during student days.

The research of Macalindong (2019), showed that several factors greatly affect the performance of the student-journalists in journalistic competitions particularly lack of trainings, seminars, and colloquiums. It was also found that student's willingness and courage to compete contributes to this problem. Thus, participants of the study suggested that trainings and seminars are important and must be part of the proposed plans and activities of the schools.

2.5 Intervention Program for the Improvement of Journalism Class

Creating an intervention in school can seem challenging but if the program is created in a structured and strategic manner as Hawthorne (2021) stressed, the chances of it being successful are much higher. In today's rapidly evolving world, the role of education is more critical than ever before. Schools play an important role in shaping the minds and futures of young individuals. However, the diverse challenges and unique needs of students necessitate the implementation of interventions within the educational system. Interventions involve budgets, monitoring, and data, but at the heart of every program is the child. Effective interventions help today's young people navigate whatever challenges they may face.

Patajo (2017) in his evaluation of the program's congruency-contingency study for University of Santo Tomas found out that SPJ goals are being met in trainings and seminars and give better results to students'

performance in the National Schools Press Conferences. Patajo in his recommendation include constant support, evaluation, and technical assistance for the program to continually succeed.

To effectively engage socially and civically, students need to know their rights. Key to this is a curricular focus on media literacy. Experience with high school journalism can help students develop media literacy skills. Thus, creating media literacy program as part of intervention strategies in journalism classes is indeed a great help. Thompson (2017) addressed the growing prevalence of false information, often presented in the form of fake news, and its impact on comprehension. Students are exposed to this false information as much as anyone is, and without media literacy instruction, one can fall victim to it. Students in journalism classes are exposed to the kind of explicit instruction, formative exercises, and practice in identifying and avoiding false information needed to improve their media literacy skills.

A research of Espadero (2017) entitled “The Implementation of Campus Journalism in the Division of Tandag City: Basis for Intervention Program” revealed that several factors greatly affect the performance of the student-journalists in journalistic competitions particularly lack of trainings, seminars, and colloquiums. It was also found that student’s willingness and courage to compete contributes to the problem. Thus, teachers of journalism subjects must attend extra trainings and seminars’ regarding the modern trend of journalism as part of the intervention process since Tandag City has been the powerhouse of student-journalists in the regional and national competitions as to campus journalism.

Further, Hawthorne (2021) emphasized that the intervention program is designed to promote social-emotional skills and mental health by utilizing whole-school approach and focuses on classroom curriculum. The approach aims to provide targeted support and assistance to students, enabling them to overcome obstacles and reach their full potential. Through personalized attention and tailored teaching approaches, students can grasp concepts better and excel in their studies. By accommodating diverse learning needs and creating accessible learning resources, schools foster a sense of belonging and respect among students, promoting a positive and accepting atmosphere. Further, addressing emotional well-being can create an environment for optimal learning and personal growth as it can equip students with tools to manage stress, build resilience, and promote healthy relationships.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study used qualitative phenomenological research design. Qualitative study according to Creswell (2012) is intended to deeply explore, understand, and interpret social phenomena within its natural setting. One of the advantages of this method is its ability to create a different knowledge through a deeper understanding of complexity of human behavior and provides a great opportunity to gather precise data about what people believe and what their motivations are. It aims to obtain a full picture of matter according to the human perspective studied.

In addition, phenomenology as research design was utilized in this research as it looked into the lived experiences of the participants or the essence of the consciousness, where essence is the phenomenon. It corresponds to the assumption that there is a need to ascertain the essence of a phenomenon through the shared meanings with other participants. Phenomenology is best as an approach in dealing with experiences (Patton, 2002). Thus, it enables the researcher explored the experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms and suggestions of the students enrolled in the Special Program in Journalism of Compostela National High School.

3.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in Compostela National High School, Compostela, Davao de Oro. Davao de Oro is a province in the Philippines located in the Davao Region in Mindanao. It was billed as the second richest province in the Philippines by the Commission on Audit by year 2017. The province borders Davao del Norte to the west, Agusan del Sur to the north, and Davao Oriental to the east. Its vast flat lands become the major rice production area of Davao Province. The majority of the inhabitants are migrants from Cebu, Samar, Bohol, and other Visayan provinces. The main sources of livelihood in the province are agricultural products such as rice, coconut, cacao, coffee, papaya, mango, pineapple, durian, and banana.

Compostela is a first class municipality in the province of Davao de Oro. Since its establishment the town slowly rose from a backward infant municipality into one of the progressive towns of the valley. Barangay Poblacion, being the only urban barangay, has the highest number of population among the sixteen barangays of Compostela with 26,773 or 32.7 percent of the municipality’s total population.

Compostela National High School is a public school located along Purok 7 Lapu-Lapu St., Poblacion, Compostela, Davao de Oro. The three-hectare school site is bounded west by Compostela Central Elementary School and Maputi Creek in the East. It is facing south along municipal road while a wide oval field is found in its rear area. The school implemented Special Program in Journalism during Academic Year 2017-2018.

3.3 Research Participants

The research participants were identified through purposive sampling, a non-probability type of sampling. The selection of the participants was based on personal judgment and discretion of the researcher. The participants were the 12 selected students in the Special Program in Journalism of Compostela National High School enrolled in Academic Year 2022-2023 and whose participation was being delimited to these criteria: first, they must have exposed themselves in campus journalism for at least one school calendar year; second, they must have joined Schools Press Conferences (may it be in the division, regional or national level); third, they must have articles published in the school paper publication; and fourth, they must be willing to be part of the study.

The participants were given an orientation about the study and signed a consent form agreeing to the condition that they were voluntarily participating in this study. The participants were asked to participate through an In-Depth Interview (IDI) as means of data collection.

Furthermore, to protect the identities of the participants during the data processing and reporting, code names were used. Preliminary stages, including validation, selecting participants, signing informed consent, and conducting In-Depth Interviews were done from September to October 2022. Transcription, translation, thematic analysis, presentation, discussion, and other concluding work were facilitated from November to December 2022.

3.4 Data Collection

The study utilized a researcher-made Interview Guide for the In-Depth Interview. The data sources were obtained from the participants' views and opinions on their journey in the Special Program in Journalism.

In all research studies, according to Creswell (2009), following accurate results can be done by following the proper procedures. Herewith, the following procedures were carefully followed for better results:

First, the participants were identified through purposive sampling. The researcher sought permission from the Schools Division Superintendent and School Principal on the conduct of the study. Second, the researcher sought consent from the participants and requested them to sign a consent letter to document their voluntary participation. Third, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and its methodology. The participants then were oriented individually. Fourth, the materials needed for the study were prepared which includes the Interview Guide and audio recorder. Fifth, In-Depth Interview followed, and the audio-and-video recorded interviews have been transcribed to provide thorough information about the lived experiences of the students in the Special Program in Journalism. The researcher used In-Depth Interview via face to face in gathering data since DepEd allows now the conduct of full face to face classes (DO 35, s. 2022). The benefit of employing the in-depth interview in this study was to give the researcher the opportunity to learn and probe the perspectives of the research participants.

In furtherance, interviews were accurately documented and ensured with safekeeping. Participants' recorded and transcribed audio and video responses were saved in a CD format.

3.5 Ethical Consideration

Ethics has become a cornerstone for conducting effective and meaningful research. As such, the ethical behavior of individual researchers is under unprecedented scrutiny (Best and Kahn, 2006).

Ethical standards are required in conducting research, thus this phenomenological method research adheres to the essential elements and principles of the Belmont Report (as cited by Miracle, 2016), which strictly observed the principles of respect of persons, beneficence, and justice.

Respect for Persons has at least two ethical considerations. The first is that the individual human research participant is treated as an autonomous being – a person who makes decisions or deliberates for themselves about personal goals and then acts upon them. It demands that participants voluntarily enter into a research study with good information about the research goals. This principle forms the basis of informed consent (Creswell, 2009). In the context of this study, the researcher sent informed consent to the research participants asking their permission to actively and willingly participate in this research. As such, the researcher made sure to respect the participants, by asking them if they sincerely desire to be part of the study. After reaching an agreement, the researcher prepared and set the interview schedule. As part of the consent prior to the actual interview, the researcher oriented the

participants about their rights. In this undertaking, the participants were given the right to have their identities protected. The researcher explained to the participants that their anonymity and confidentiality were respected and that they had the right to withdraw at any stage without being offended. Their names were not disclosed; rather code names were used in all transcriptions. They were given the right to ask questions during the interview and each was given a transcript of the interview before the data analysis.

Beneficence has to do with doing good to the individual. In the Belmont Report, beneficence is understood in a stronger sense, as an obligation to do no harm and maximize possible benefits, and minimize possible harm to the individual research participant. In this study, the researcher made sure that the research outcome is positive and beneficial to the research participants. It is beneficial in the sense that through the lived experiences of the students, there would be some changes in the Special Program in Journalism curriculum. Hence, this study hopes to bring enhancement in the journalism program of Compostela National High School.

Moreover, in the last tenet of the Belmont Report, justice refers to the benefits and harms to individual subjects of the research. In this tenet, the benefits and burden of research should be justly distributed. Thus, the questions asked are only relevant to the participants (Adams, 2008). As suggested, the research participants in this study were equitably selected. The researcher made sure that all the principles are addressed to protect the rights of the participants. Further, to ensure justice, the results of this study were presented to the participants.

In addition, this study adhered to the Republic Act 10173, or the Data Privacy Act, which protects people from the unauthorized processing of personal information. It is private, not publicly available, and identifiable, where the individual's identity is apparent either through direct attribution or when put together with other available information (National Privacy Commission, 2012). The National Privacy Commission protects individual personal information and upholds the right to privacy by regulating the processing of personal information. In this study, anonymity and participants' privacy were maintained wherever possible to increase data processing security.

4. FINDINGS

Presented in this chapter are the lived experiences of the Special Program in Journalism students, their challenges, coping mechanisms, and suggestions that emerged from the information gathered through the In-depth Interview. The responses were subjected to content analysis where the themes across all responses were drawn. In keeping with the research ethics for qualitative research, codes had been used to conceal the identities of the research participants. The findings were presented according to the order of specific research questions used in this study.

4.1 Positive Experiences as a Student of Special Program in Journalism

The themes in the section were coming from the specific research question 1.1 'What positive experiences can you share as student of Special Program in Journalism?' The responses generated seven themes: meeting a lot of people, being encouraged by teachers and classmates, taking part in radio and tv broadcasting, being part of various teams, being commended for achievements, and traveling to compete outside of the municipality.

4.2 Positive Experiences as a Student of Special Program in Journalism

The themes in the section were coming from the specific research question 1.2 'How do these experiences positively affect your views as a student of Special Program in Journalism?' under the 1st major research question 'What are the experiences of the research participants that are valuable in their journey as students in the Special Program in Journalism?' The following themes are: SPJ broadened one's horizons, taught to become responsible student, making better in the field of journalism, helped in getting good grades, becoming influencers to other students, perception and understanding changed, honing of abilities in radio broadcasting, gained knowledge and confidence, helped improved communication skills, mutually learned from each other, and motivated to serve and inspire others.

4.3 Reasons for Enrolling in SPJ

The responses generated five themes: SPJ just a second choice, to improve writing and communication skills, becoming one's best version, enjoyed reporting and family and friends' support, and love of writing.

4.4 Challenges Encountered in SPJ

The themes derived from the responses of the research informants to the specific research question 2.1 'What challenges have you encountered in the Special Program in Journalism?' are presented in this section. The

themes were: a lot of pressure, finding the transitions too hard, limited time given to events, process of building self-confidence, no background in journalism, meeting writing standards, and low self-confidence.

4.5 Difficulties Experienced in SPJ

The themes in the section were coming from the specific research question 2.2 ‘What are the difficulties you have experienced in the Special Program in Journalism?’ After subjecting the responses to content analysis, the following themes were drawn: problem with time management, bombarded with uncertainties, no background in news article writing, no idea about journalism, tasks and activities of major subjects, speaking in front of people, and balancing work in school and in home.

4.6 Techniques Used To Cope with the Challenges Experienced

The themes created were from the responses to the specific research question 3.1 ‘What techniques do you use to cope with the challenges you experienced in the Special Program in Journalism?’ The following were the themes: through constant practice, avoiding negative thoughts, trust the process and believe in the teachers, turning mistakes into motivations, interacting people with same interest in journalism, put more interest in journalism, make fun with problems encountered, setting the timetable, spending time with friends, and develop a speech over a chosen topic.

4.7 Ways Used to Manage Techniques to Cope with Challenges Encountered

Presented in this section are the themes drawn from the responses to the specific question 3.2 ‘How do you manage the techniques you used to cope with the challenges you experienced in the Special Program in Journalism?’ The following themes were created: practice becoming a daily habit, careful planning, continue learning to communicate, go with the flow, through self-control, studying and spending time, motivating self to write and read books, using the technique when alone, and constant review of previous articles.

4.8 Positive Outcomes of Coping Mechanisms

The themes in the section were coming from the specific research question 3.3 ‘What positive outcome does your coping mechanism in the Special Program in Journalism have?’ The responses generated six themes: having attained significant improvement, improving communication skills and confidence, made better in all aspects, becoming more competitive, being helped become more focused, and getting good grades.

4.9 Suggestions and Recommendations to Improve SPJ Learning Process

The results were taken from the responses to the specific research question 4.1 ‘What are your suggestions/recommendations to improve the learning process in SPJ?’ under the 4th major research question, ‘What are the suggestions/recommendations of the participants to improve the program?’ The following were the themes drawn from the responses: journalistic skills trainings and seminars, no discrimination between STE and SPJ programs, enrichment programs for SPJ, separate room for printing and broadcasting, teachers having good relationship with students, enough equipment, internet connectivity in every SPJ room, immersion activities outside of school, and support from school leadership.

4.10 Intervention Program Crafted From the Findings of the Study

The intervention program was developed precisely taking into consideration the experiences, the challenges, the coping mechanisms, and the suggestions and recommendations of the students to improve the learning process in the Special Program in Journalism. Hence, the intervention program was created based on the data gathered.

PROJECT JOG (Journalism on the Go). Based on the data gathered, an intervention program entitled ‘PROJECT JOG’ is developed. This project on the GO serves as a GO signal for the SPJ to be a top performing special program in Compostela National High School as it aims to improve the weaknesses of the program identified in the study. This intervention program includes yearly activities to enhance and develop the journalistic skills of the students. The activities were based on the suggestions and recommendations of the participants to improve the learning process in SPJ. There will be activities per grade level every quarter and the activities per grade level will be delegated to the teachers assigned on that grade level. The activities are aligned with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs). For the first quarter, the activity will be entitled ‘JOURNament’. This journalism tournament is designed to gauge the students' prior understanding of journalism. The seventh-grade competition will concentrate on printed journalism, which includes sports writing, news writing, editorial writing, editorial cartooning, and feature writing. It will also include writing about science and technology. On the other hand, online

journalism will be the main subject matter for grade eight. The only difference is that students will now write their articles on computers rather than paper and pens, demonstrating the same skill in the various sorts of journalistic write-ups. Additionally, the emphasis in grade nine will be on creating and reading radio news scripts. While for grade ten, the emphasis will be on creating and reading television news scripts. The JOURNament will also serve as the basis for choosing the staff members of Compostela National High School's official publications, SPECTRUM and BUSILAK.

For the second quarter, the activity will be entitled 'SPJante B.L.U.E.S (Building Leadership Using the Essential Skills in journalism)'. The main objective of this activity is to conduct training sessions and seminars for Special Program in Journalism teachers and students. Part of the goal is to invite SPJ teachers from other schools to be resource speakers. Moreover, former SPJ students who won in the regional or national level will be invited also as speakers of designated events. This is to give chance to the students to share their knowledge and skills in journalism.

'PRINTeam' will be the name of the activity for the third quarter. The emphasis will be on print media-related activities. The concentration will be on layout, video editing, vlogging, collaborative publishing, and online publishing.

In addition, the fourth quarter will feature "JournLeague." The major goal is to improve SPJ's admissions procedure. This is in preparation of the seventh-grade applicants. Planning will be done for community-focused programs, school campaigns, immersion activities, and advocacy initiatives.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the discussion and conclusion of the study that aimed to describe the lived experiences of the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) students.

The presentation of the discussions was divided into four subsets; a) the experiences, b) the challenges encountered, c) coping mechanisms used in dealing with the challenges, d) suggestions of the participants to improve the journalism program, and e) crafted intervention program based on the findings of the study. The discussion section highlighted the themes that emerged from the study and were supported by related literature and studies.

5.1 Positive Experiences as a Student of Special Program in Journalism

The emerging themes in this structured theme are meeting a lot of people, being encouraged by teachers and classmates, taking part in radio and tv broadcasting, participating in training and press conferences, being part of various teams, being commended for achievements, and traveling to compete outside of the municipality. These were the positive experiences of the students in the Special Program in Journalism.

The finding revealed that meeting a lot of people is one of the positive experiences of students in the Special Program in Journalism. The majority of the informants agreed that exposure to other people is extremely important. Thus, meeting a large number of people implies a social connection. This connection strengthens relationships and gives them a sense of belonging and purpose. Meeting new people, according to the research participants, are also a good way to make new friends. In furtherance, the result lends support to the progressivist philosophy which states that learning is primarily a social activity. Routman (2005) contends that students learn more when they are able to talk to one another and be actively involved. Thus, social interaction is vital to the learning process.

Moreover, being encouraged by teachers and classmates is another positive experience that some research participants claimed. This means that teachers and students can create a culture of encouragement by embodying the belief that every student has potential and ability. Students whose teachers offer encouragement are more likely to continue their education beyond the age of sixteen than those who do not get the same support, according to a study of Alcott (2017) at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. The study revealed that a teacher's encouragement has a much greater impact on students. These students who reported receiving positive feedback from their teachers more often finished high school and pursued college.

In addition, taking part in radio and tv broadcasting and being part of various teams are other positive experiences that some research participants stressed as they were able to conquer their fear of talking in front. Today, there is strong scientific support for the benefits of students learning and working in groups. The finding supports the study of Johnson and Johnson (2004) which tells that collaborative work promotes both academic achievement and collaborative abilities. When working interactively with others, students learn to inquire, share ideas, clarify differences, solve problems, and construct new understandings. Gillies (2003) also stresses that students working together are more motivated to achieve than they would be when working individually.

On the other hand, some participants noted that participating in training, seminars, and press conferences is a wonderful experience. For it means learning new things. According to Bates (2016), seminars and training have been used as a teaching method since Socrates for their value in engaging students in the teaching and learning process. Socrates did not teach explicitly but created situations and raised questions that require students to think and analyze using their higher-level thinking skills. Students are viewed as contributors to shaping reality and finding truth by bringing their experience, identity, and values into the learning and teaching process.

Furthermore, some informants claimed that being commended for achievement is something to be proud of as it denotes being recognized by others. In an article written by Mattone (2020) entitled “The Power of Praise: How Commendation Impacts Leadership Development,” praise, appreciation, and recognition are considered as nourishment to the human spirit. Striving for appreciation and recognition is as natural as breathing. From the perspective of intelligent leadership, Mattone believed that praise represents an ideal channel to improve the working and learning environment.

In furtherance, traveling outside of the municipality for competition is another positive experience of the informants in SPJ. According to Tucker (2018) in her study entitled “Effects of Competition on Academic Achievement,” competition is important in academic achievement because it motivates students to strive for excellence.

5.2 Challenges Encountered in SPJ

The responses elicited seven emerging themes: a lot of pressure, finding transitions too hard, limited time given to events, process of building self-confidence, no background in journalism, meeting writing standards, and low self-confidence. The finding revealed that one of the challenges faced by the students is the program's pressure. School pressure has been shown to increase stress and anxiety in students, resulting in poorer physical, social, and emotional health. Students may feel pressure to achieve higher grades and academic success from their parents, school, teachers, society, or themselves.

The finding supports the study of Pascoe, Hetrick, and Parker (2020) about the impact of stress and pressure on students in secondary school and higher education which tells that the academic-related stress and pressure experienced by secondary and tertiary students impact their mental and physical health and leads to a range of academic problems. On the other hand, according to Liu (2015) in 298 Chinese secondary school students, academic pressure in Grade 10 negatively predicted intrinsic academic motivation and positively predicted a lack of motivation in Grade 12. This indicates that decreasing academic-related pressure might preserve students' ongoing intrinsic academic motivation (Liu and Lu, 2011).

Another challenge revealed by the informants is finding the transitions too hard. Some informants mentioned culture shock. Goldstein and Keller (2015) found that students tended to attribute culture shock to differences in the external environment which includes language, communication, and surroundings rather than to internal affective or cognitive factors such as poor stress management, identity confusion, or prejudice. The tendency to attribute culture shock to internal causes was greater for those with higher levels of cultural competence.

Other challenges encountered by SPJ students is the process of building confidence and having low self-confidence. Patil (2008) asserted that building up the learner's confidence to eliminate their fear or making errors was a priority that a teacher should consider in order to make learners feel comfortable. Confidence and competence in writing and speaking could be developed from methods of teaching and adequate tasks and materials.

In addition, no background in journalism is another challenge revealed by the informants. Marzano (2004) reports on the very strong relationship between previous knowledge and how well children do in school. In English Language Teaching, Nation (2006) concludes from his research that learners need to know approximately 98 percent of the words in written and spoken language in order to understand what they hear or read well. Overall, research overwhelmingly shows that students who already know about the topic will learn readily and well, while students who do not have sufficient background knowledge will not learn well.

Further, meeting writing standards is another challenge. Triola (2003) suggests that the problems experienced by students in journalism programs are attributable, in part, to their difficulties in executing and regulating the processes which underlie proficient composing, planning, and revisions of their work. Another important element in achieving excellence in the field of journalism is the reflective process which is the ability to critique one's work as well as the work of peers.

5.3 Techniques Used to Cope with Challenges Experienced

The emerging themes were through constant practice, avoiding negative thoughts, trust the process and believe in the teachers, turning mistakes into motivations, interacting people with same interest in journalism, put more interest in journalism, make fun with problems encountered, setting the timetable, spending time with friends, and develop a speech over chosen topic. The findings revealed that the informants have different techniques used in coping with the challenges experienced. It was found then that constant practice is one of the coping techniques used by the informants. Practice is what makes one better. However, the quality of the practice is as important as the quantity.

According to Reder (2020), practice posits individuals' literacy proficiencies as a by-product of their engagement in everyday reading and writing practices and reciprocally, that literacy proficiencies affect levels of engagement in reading and writing practices. This suggests that literacy training which increases engagement in meaningful practices might generate proficiency growth. Research has shown that this approach does indeed seem to be effective in improving learners' performances.

Another strategy employed by the informants is the avoidance of negative thoughts. The most important factor is trusting one's own skills and abilities. However, there are individuals who cannot avoid thinking negatively. As stressed by Watkins (2008), unconstructive forms of repetitive thinking may represent a cognitive vulnerability factor implicated in the development and maintenance of various emotional disorders such as anxiety disorders and depression.

On the other hand, Shallcross (2010) investigated whether a proclivity to accept negative emotional experiences protects people from experiencing elevated negative affect and developing depressive symptoms in the face of life stress. The findings show that acceptance was associated with lower negative affect during a negative emotion induction but not during an affectively neutral condition.

With this, breaking negative patterns and stopping the subconscious mind from "looping" unwanted thoughts is important. According to Hawkey (2013), the first step toward overcoming negative thinking is to observe thoughts rather than be 'hooked' by them. One may become free of any impact that negative thoughts may have once one learns to recognize and 'unhook' them as they arise.

Moreover, this study revealed that trusting the process and believing the teachers is another coping mechanism used by the informants. Trust is thus an essential component of a positive teacher-student relationship and a positive learning environment. This result supports the study of Demerath (2022) which provides a grounded model of how educators earn students' trust in a high-performing urban high school in the United States. The goal of this long-term anthropological project was to learn about the beliefs and practices of experienced teachers and staff members who were nominated by students as making them feel like they belonged at school. Data analysis revealed a mutual discernment process in which adults and young people read each other as they explored the possibility of forming learning partnerships. According to the study data, educators' trust-building strategies were largely based on the student discernment process.

Some informants, on the other hand, revealed that the coping technique they used is turning mistakes into motivations. Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck, as cited by Keegan (2021), identifies a certain way of building a growth mindset by embracing mistakes and developing a resilient mindset. She mentions about encouraging growth over achievement will surely boost motivation and productivity.

Similarly, mistakes for Kafer and Kuger (2018) are viewed as natural elements of learning processes. Hence, a supportive and constructive approach to dealing with student mistakes has been shown to improve students' individual motivation and learning performance.

Aside from the techniques mentioned above, several informants stated that interacting with people who share the same interest in journalism, as well as putting more interest in journalism, are other coping strategies. Friendships can be strengthened by sharing common interests. Some people have difficulty talking about themselves or having a simple conversation about life. A shared interest brings people together for a common goal, and it is often in the pursuit of that goal that friendships are formed. For White (2022), sharing an activity or knowing the topic of conversation ahead of time relieves the pressure of a conversation, especially in the early stages of a friendship. Meetings that are held on a regular basis allow for more time spent together. Friendship bonds are formed as a person discovers and creates more shared experiences. Sharing means learning. The more talking, the more knowledge one may learn from the other.

Several informants of the study also stated that showing interest in something will lead to better learning because it will be easier to learn something in which one is interested. As Paul (2013) cited that in recent years, researchers have begun to construct a science of interest, looking into what interest is, how it develops, what makes things interesting, and how one can cultivate interest. The researchers discovered that being interested can help one

think more clearly, understand more deeply, and remember more accurately for interest has the ability to transform underachievers and propel high achievers to new heights.

Another coping technique revealed by the informants is making fun with problems encountered. Nothing works faster or more consistently to restore balance to the mind and body than a good laugh. Humor relieves stress, inspires hope, connects people, and keeps one grounded, focused, and alert. With so much healing and renewing power, the ability to laugh easily and frequently is a fantastic resource for overcoming problems, improving relationships, and supporting both physical and emotional health. Best of all, this invaluable medicine is enjoyable, free, and simple to use. As cited by Louie, Brook, and Frates (2016) in the American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine, laughter is a complex emotional response to one's surroundings, circumstances, and stimuli. Although it had been studied for many years, it was not widely recognized as having any particular healing effect until 1979, when Norman Cousins published *Anatomy of an Illness*. Cousins described laughter as having an analgesic effect on his enclosing spondylitis pain in the book. Since then, interest in laughter as a potential therapeutic option has grown, both in popular culture and in scientific research, where the field of psychoneuroimmunology attempts to investigate the impact of laughter on physiology and psychology.

Moreover, setting a timetable and spending time with friends were also mentioned as coping techniques by study participants. According to Panigrahi (2023), managing academics, projects, and assignments, as well as exam preparation can be a stressful task for many young students. Students frequently opt for last-minute preparation because they are unable to divide the time evenly for each topic of the subjects, which not only results in a zero score but also obstructs their learning capability. Recognizing the value of time and effectively utilizing it to focus on the goal allows one to accomplish much more with fewer efforts.

In addition, developing a speech on a chosen topic is another coping technique revealed by the informants. The technique is quite unique, as only a few will employ it. The study of Fauziya et al. (2022) supports this statement as the goal was to track the development of students' speech skills using creative thinking methods. Methods used in the study include observation, questioning, semiotic analysis, discourse analysis, and an analytical essay. The typical mechanical action that students perform automatically is not required for tasks aimed at developing students' creative abilities. It necessitates action at a high creative level, as well as activity that arises as a result of creative thinking. These activities encourage students to think creatively while playing and to develop the ability to freely express themselves in both oral and written speech.

5.4 Suggestions and Recommendations to Improve SPJ Learning Process

The responses revealed eight emerging themes: journalistic skills trainings and seminars, no discrimination between STE and SPJ programs, enrichment programs for SPJ, separate room for printing and broadcasting, teachers having good relationship with students, enough equipment, internet connectivity, immersion activities outside of school, and support from school leadership.

The findings showed that a number of factors, particularly a lack of training, seminars, and workshops, have a significant impact on the performance of students enrolled in the Special Program in Journalism. Similarly, it was revealed that students' eagerness and courage to compete contributes also to this issue. As per suggested by the informants, both students and teachers should attend training and seminars on journalism in order to be knowledgeable and updated on the current trends.

This supports the findings of Al'Adawi (2017) in his research which tells that seminars and training have a positive effect on enriching classroom learning and increasing students' responsibility for their own learning, which can be achieved through teacher and student training.

Another emerging theme is that no discrimination should be made between STE and SPJ programs. The informants revealed that they were compared to STE students and felt pressured when teachers told them to work harder like the latter. Consequently, SPJ must be seen as a top-performing program in the school along with STE. Thus, there should not be a distinction between the two programs because both produced students with great talent and skills.

Furthermore, the informants also suggested enrichment programs. These enrichment programs will help students in improving their writing and speaking skills. These will also serve as a platform to re-calibrate their ways and refresh their knowledge in order to reset their state of mind and accumulate functional perspectives. As cited by Kish (2020) in an article entitled *Enrichment Programs Help Children Build Knowledge*, new research from Carnegie Mellon University provides the first direct evidence that experiential programs improve a child's ability to retain new information and generalize it to new situations. These findings imply that enrichment programs integrated into a standard academic curriculum could improve knowledge acquisition and academic success.

In addition, enough equipment, a separate room for printing and broadcasting, and internet connectivity in every SPJ room are other suggestions of the informants. For the program to become effective, materials and equipment are needed. Microphones, speakers, cameras, laptops, printers, broadcasting rooms for radio and television, speech laboratory, and printing rooms are important in the program. DepEd Order No. 103, s. 2009 states that for the school to implement SPJ, the school should have separate classroom for the program, equipped with at least 10 computer units with Internet connection, printer with scanner, modem, CD writer, camera with tripod, video recorder, projector, TV set, and display boards. Classrooms must be equipped with journalism-related software and courseware.

This, however, is a problem at Compostela National High School. There are no facilities for printing or broadcasting. There is no speech laboratory, nor are microphones or speakers available. As a result, teachers who teach Campus Journalism must be creative and resourceful in order to meet students' needs. The internet connection is another issue. Students will need reliable internet access, especially if they are tasked with creating newsletters.

Moreover, another suggestion from informants to improve the SPJ is for teachers to have good relationships with students. The informants emphasized the importance of having positive relationships in order to reduce the stress they felt. Ahnert et al. (2010) stated that teachers who foster positive relationships with their students create more conducive learning environments and meet students' developmental, emotional, and academic needs. A positive student-teacher relationship can improve not only academic performance but also school engagement. If the child has a positive relationship with the teachers, he or she will not skip classes. According to psychoanalytic theory, positive teacher-student relationships are especially important for outcomes in classrooms because they can provide the child with necessary emotional support.

The findings also revealed immersion activities. Informants suggested that there should be immersion and activities outside of school for students to practice their journalism skills with people they did not know. In journalism, as stated by Humes (2011), immersion has traditionally been understood as a research technique based on the premise that the reporter must spend a significant amount of time learning about reality before it can be narrated. As a result, journalists must spend some time immersed in the social reality they want to document. This only means that immersions prepare students for the real world as they learn new skills and improve their existing ones. Students can also discover themselves and jumpstart their professional development.

Above all, support from school leadership is at the top list. The study revealed that the informants suggested that a school principal must be supportive in terms of funding, equipment, and rooms. Activities will not be realized if the school principal will not support them. According to the study of Karacabey (2021), the Turkish education system has enacted a 2023 vision that emphasizes that school principals create and organize professional learning activities based on the needs of students and teachers. The study sought to assess the vision by determining the level of support given to teachers' professional development by school principals. According to the findings, school principals supported teachers' professional development because supporting teachers means supporting students.

5.5 Intervention Program to Improve the Learning Process in SPJ

The data gathered based on the suggestions and recommendations of the students resulted to the creation of an intervention program to improve the learning process in the Special Program in Journalism. Interventions as stressed by Hawthorne (2021) allow teachers to address gaps in student's progress. Effective interventions can then be employed to overcome barriers to the student's learning once a need has been recognized. This supports the study of Espadero (2017) which reveals that several factors greatly affect the performance of the students in journalistic competitions particularly lack of trainings, seminars, and workshops. It was also found that student's willingness and courage to compete contributes to the problem. Thus, SPJ teachers must attend extra trainings and seminars regarding the modern trend of journalism as part of the intervention process.

Additionally, Patajo (2017) in his assessment of the program's congruency-contingency research for the University of Santo Tomas discovered that SPJ objectives are accomplished in trainings and seminars and improve students' performance in the National Schools Press Conferences. For the program to continue to be successful, Patajo recommends on-going support, evaluation, and technical assistance.

Moreover, learning about journalism can aid students in acquiring media literacy abilities. As a result, establishing media literacy programs in journalism classes as part of intervention measures is really helpful. Thompson (2017) talked about the spread of false information and how it affects comprehension. False information is frequently presented as fake news. Students are equally exposed to this false information as the general public, and without media literacy training, anyone can be duped.

In this study, the findings revealed that majority of the students suggested enrichment activities, trainings and seminars, journalistic competitions, immersion, benchmarking, media literacy programs, and community-related programs. Based on the result, 'PROJECT JOG' is developed. The SPJ's ability to be a top-performing special program at Compostela National High School is signalled by this initiative on the GO as it is known as Project Journalism on the GO. It is an intervention program aims to improve the weaknesses of SPJ as identified in the study. The students' journalistic skills will be improved and developed each year as part of this intervention. Every quarter, there will be activities for each grade level, which will be handled by the teachers assigned. The activities are aligned with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs).

As stipulated in DO No. 46, s. 2012 the program standards for Campus Journalism subject is that the learners demonstrate understanding of the basic principles and theories of journalism, its practices and techniques, and responsibly applies them as tools for effective communication and information. For the seventh grade which is Print Journalism, the learner demonstrates understanding of the basic principles, theories, practices, and techniques of print journalism, its history, legal, and ethical standards by producing newsletters responsive to individual, community, societal, and global needs. For eighth grade, the learner demonstrates understanding of the advanced and broader applications of the concepts and techniques of print journalism by producing an eight-page printed or online news publication responsive to individual, community, societal, and global demands as it focuses on Print and Online Publication. For ninth grade which is Radio Broadcasting, the learner demonstrates understanding of the practices, techniques, and fundamentals of broadcast journalism by producing radio news programs in response to the personal, school, and community needs. Furthermore, for the tenth grade, the learner demonstrates understanding of the practices, techniques, and fundamentals of broadcast journalism by producing TV news programs in response to personal, school, and community needs as it deals with TV Broadcasting.

In Project JOG, the activities per quarter are named according to its goal and purpose. The activity's name for the first quarter will be "JOURNament." This journalism competition aims to determine the students' previous knowledge in journalism. The seventh-grade competition will focus on printed journalism. Print journalism has a significant impact on children's positive development in terms of various career-related information and educational information, which may help to improve students' knowledge and awareness of numerous facets of life. People may seek guidance because this is a period of inquiry and change (Arnett,2000).

For grade eight, however, the focus will be mostly on online journalism. The main difference is that instead of using paper and pencils, students will now write their articles on computers, displaying the same proficiency in the various types of journalistic write-ups. The focus of research on online journalism according to Song and Lin (2012) is now more on innovation-driven aspects that are specific to the non-linear, multimodal, and interactive environment of news production than on extending and maintaining the qualities of the traditional journalism genre online.

Additionally, for grade nine the emphasis will be on creating and reading radio news scripts. For Litherland (2020), many young students are drawn to careers in radio and communications. Thus, it is better for radio education to take place in a school setting to give them a head start. One of the main purposes of the broadcast medium is education. It is considerably stronger since it can assume the shape of any language and combines the strength of words and images. This has been supported by Iji (2005) which states that the media play a significant role in society by keeping the public informed and educating them on important topics. The broadcast media aids education through educational broadcasting.

Finally, for grade ten, the emphasis will be on creating and reading television news scripts. The use of television as a teaching tool helps students learn more about diverse cultures, fosters tolerance, and fosters an understanding of global challenges. According to Sambo (2012), broadcast media are instruments that give the past a sense of actuality. They give the students practical experiences that engage them and aid in their comprehension of historical processes. Through the use of the visual and auditory senses, they engage the mind. Additionally, Ortyoyande (2006) pointed out that we learn through our senses and that hearing something causes us to forget, seeing it causes us to recall, and doing it causes us to know it. Therefore, having access to instructional television helps to improve and accelerate learning. Further, recent advancements in television have had a significant impact on educational practices, improving the standard of education provided to students. Also, on the part of the teachers, utilizing television as a teaching tool will result in more effective classroom education (Onabajo, 2000).

5.6 Implication for Practice

Based on the findings, the following implications for practice are offered.

On Positive Experiences as a Student of Special Program in Journalism. It can be reckoned that the research participants shared positive experiences in Special Program in Journalism. The positive experiences

mentioned were meeting a lot of people, being encouraged by teachers and classmates, taking part in radio and tv broadcasting, participating in training and press conferences, being part of various teams, being commended for achievements, and traveling outside of the municipality. The findings showed that students in the Special Program in Journalism have different positive experiences that they cherished the most. These positive experiences were wonderful moments they could not forget. The majority of the participants find their journey in SPJ meaningful when they received commendations as they excel in a certain field or carry the name of the school in certain competitions.

The findings implied that teachers are great factors in creating such meaningful experiences and helping students enrich their lives with the drive to succeed. Teachers must see to it that students get to learn in a fun and creative setting by letting them appreciate the world of journalism through their own lens. Also, involving them in various activities and competitions is a great help for them to grow. These provide a channel for reinforcing their learning. For this reason, the integration of journalism in all subject areas is important for the students to embrace the main purpose of the program and for them to be prepared for competitions like school press conferences.

Additionally, teachers should build a culture of praise and encouragement for the students to strive harder. This is also a way to provide a supportive and friendly environment for them.

On Challenges Encountered in SPJ. The findings of the study showed that students responded differently to the reasons for enrolling in SPJ. Some pointed out a lot of pressure, others find the transitions too hard, and others mentioned problems regarding limited time given to events, the process of building self-confidence, having no background in journalism, meeting writing standards, and having low self-confidence. This implies that there is a need to make a shift in the usual learning environment of SPJ in which teachers make challenge the new comfort zone of the students. This can be done by instilling in the minds of the students that stress and pressure are part of their growth and that they need to know how to overcome them. Teachers must create a classroom where activities that provide challenge and develop perseverance can be found. This will help in building autonomy in learning. Through these challenges, teachers will also be able to learn about their students' abilities and use them as reference points to help them develop and improve.

On Techniques Used to Cope with Challenges Experienced. The results of the study have an implication that students can develop both writing and speaking skills through constant practice, avoiding negative thoughts, trusting the process and believing the teachers, turning mistakes into motivations, interacting with people with the same interest in journalism, putting more interest in journalism, making fun with problems encountered, setting a timetable, spending time with friends, and developing a speech over chosen topic. Given the findings, teachers must push students to do better in finding ways in handling problems. It is also helpful to cultivate trust and positive thinking. Also, letting the students believe that they can do the impossible can help them feel motivated.

Suggestions and Recommendations to Improve SPJ Learning Process. The findings of this study revealed that journalistic skills training and seminars, no discrimination between STE and SPJ programs, enrichment programs for SPJ, separate rooms for printing and broadcasting, teachers having a good relationship with students, enough equipment, internet connectivity in every SPJ room, immersion activities outside of school, and support from school leadership were needed to improve the learning process in the Special Program in Journalism.

Journalistic skills training and seminars are needed by both teachers and students to improve their level of awareness. These can educate them about new skills and provide updates on existing skills to enhance productivity.

Participants, on the other hand, suggested also that they should not be compared to STE students because they have different inclinations and the two programs are totally different. This implies that teachers must never compare SPJ students to other programs. SPJ must be seen as top performing program in the school along with STE.

Enrichment programs are also suggested to improve students' styles in writing and at the same time develop their speaking skills. This implies that training and workshops should be conducted annually or once every quarter to be a platform for the learners to recalibrate their ways and refresh their knowledge.

Enough equipment and availability of rooms for printing and broadcasting are also mentioned. Students, to fully develop their skills, need to have the proper equipment for their tasks and performances. They can truly master their craft if they are given appropriate materials. Thus, utilizing the right resources implies that students should be given importance by letting them experience activities that would develop their skills and abilities. For example, in radio scriptwriting and broadcasting activity, students must have microphones, speakers, laptops, and printers.

Further, speech laboratory was also suggested. This implies that students want to improve and enhance their speaking skills. It would be easier for them to learn about proper pronunciation and enunciation of the words. It provides a facility which allows the students to listen to their performance and compare with the model, and do self-assessment. In this case, teachers will do the modelling in which they will utter the word and then the students will mimic it.

Moreover, press room is proposed. This implies that students desired to have an office in which they could visit and use for writing practice sessions. The students really felt the difficulty in finding available rooms in which they could use during the making of school paper. Besides that one, internet connectivity was also mentioned. This implies that the students want to explore and learn the online world as they search for relevant topics needed in their respective subjects. Also, an internet connection is needed in making newsletters and school papers which the participants were tasked to publish every quarter.

In addition, the participants also stressed that teachers should have a good relationship with the students. The implication of this could help the students feel more at ease and reduce stress in the program. Teachers must serve as advocates, coaches, and facilitators.

Meanwhile, immersion activities are also suggested. This implies that students want to apply the knowledge they have in a real setting. Students want to discover more about their selves and jumpstart their professional growth.

Lastly, support from school leadership is highly suggested. This means that both emotional and financial support from the administration is needed to improve the learning process in SPJ. Proper allocation of funds intended for the program is recommended.

5.7 Conclusion

With the lived experiences of the Special Program in Journalism students as the main focus, the understanding of experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, suggestions to improve the learning process, and the crafted intervention program from the findings of the study was highlighted. The understanding of the situations of the students in the Special Program in Journalism drawn from their experiences could reinforce the means of crafting intervention program to better improve the learning process.

The results showed that students in the Special Program in Journalism faced a lot of problems along their way. The participants disclosed that stress and pressure in adherence to the demands of the program, balancing time, building self-confidence, finding the transitions too hard knowing that not all have background in journalism, and meeting writing and speaking standards were the reasons of their struggles in the program.

To address these concerns, the results of the study indicate that a curriculum aligned with the school's journalism program might be improved to create high-quality trainings and workshops as an effective strategy to develop the talents and skills of the students and at the same time, prepare them for various competitions and school press conferences.

Moreover, teachers need to attend to a variety of seminars that could improve and enhance knowledge of the trends of modern journalism. Training on the integration of journalism across all learning areas must be given to all SPJ teachers that would capacitate them with the techniques on how to integrate journalism in each subject. Additionally, Campus Journalism and Advanced English teachers need to have solid training. For the two disciplines, module writing workshops must be offered.

Benchmarking to other SPJ implementing schools is also regarded as being quite beneficial. By looking at other schools' procedures and models and modifying their methods and approaches, it establishes best practices for teaching and learning.

Students, on the other hand, need to adapt to the transitions and stay positive despite all the challenges. Coping strategies do actually allow them to keep their emotional equilibrium, preparing them for whatever problems they may face. Teachers have a great impact to do this action and motivate them to succeed. Teachers have a great role in creating positive experiences to the students, thus making a learning environment that embraces the differences of each learner is part of the process.

In furtherance, the research findings from the students' experiences will assist school administrators and curriculum designers in determining the improvement programs that should be included in the Special Program in Journalism as well as the activities required to help students develop their skills and talents.

Further, the Department of Education must take decisive action to advance high standards for campus journalism, boost digital literacy, and motivate students to maximize these resources.

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