IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OPEN HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM OF ST. PAUL UNIVERSITY SURIGAO: LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS OF STUDENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS
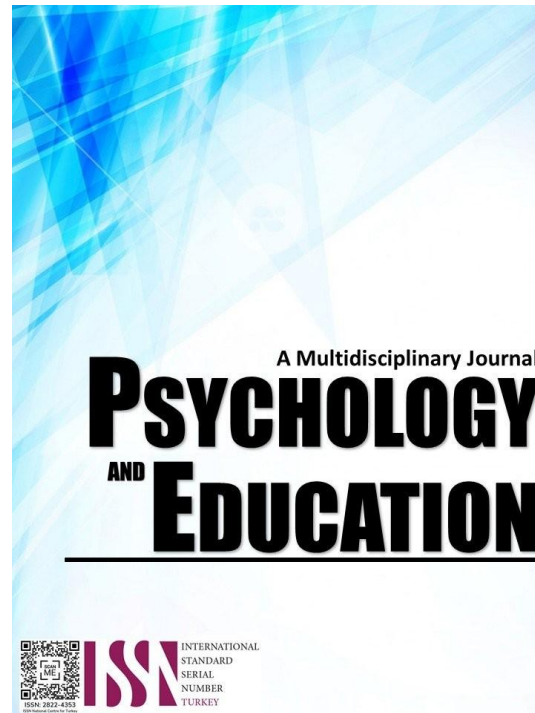
Implementation of the Open High School System of St. Paul University Surigao: Looking Through the Lens of Students and Stakeholders

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of students and stakeholders involved in the Open High School System (OHSS) using Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological approach. Through in-depth interviews guided by grand tour questions, the study sought to understand the realities, challenges, and support systems surrounding the OHSS implementation. Participants included students, teachers, and parents directly engaged in the program. The findings revealed several recurring themes: financial problems affecting students' access to learning resources and; irregular teacher attendance, which hampered consistent delivery of instruction; student attendance and motivation issues due to competing responsibilities at home and lack of direct supervision; and the critical role of familial support in sustaining student participation and academic performance. These shared experiences provide insight into the complexities of implementing alternative education programs in diverse contexts. The study emphasizes the need for strengthened institutional support, targeted interventions, and consistent stakeholder engagement to address the systemic challenges identified. Ultimately, the research aimed to contribute to the improvement of the OHSS by informing policy and program enhancements grounded in lived realities.

Keywords: *Students, Stakeholders, Open High School System, Qualitative*

Introduction

The Philippine Department of Education, in its commitment to inclusive and equitable education, implemented the Open High School System (OHSS) through DepEd Order No. 46, s. 2006 as a flexible learning alternative for students hindered by economic, geographic, personal, or social challenges. This system adopts a modular and self-paced approach, enabling learners to study independently while receiving periodic guidance from teachers. Despite major reforms such as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, which introduced the K-12 curriculum to improve accessibility and quality in the education system (Republic Act No. 10533, 2013), many Filipino students still encounter barriers that prevent regular school attendance (UNESCO, 2021; Albert et al., 2018). In this context, the OHSS serves as a vital intervention in bridging educational gaps, particularly for marginalized learners who require alternative pathways to complete their secondary education.

The Philippine Department of Education introduced the Open High School Program (OHSP) through DepEd Order No. 46, s. 2006, as a flexible learning alternative designed to accommodate students who face barriers to traditional classroom attendance. While the program has been implemented in various public schools, its application within private institutions remains underexplored. At Saint Paul University Surigao (SPUS), the OHSP—locally adapted as the Open High School System—represents a significant step toward inclusive education, particularly in a city where geographic and economic disparities can hinder student participation. However, limited research exists on how such private institutions implement and navigate the challenges of this model, especially from the perspectives of the stakeholders (parents and teachers) directly involved.

This lack of data on private-sector adaptations and experiences prompted the current study, which aims to explore the experiences of students, parents, and teachers at SPUS to gain a deeper understanding of the contextual factors influencing the program's implementation. By doing so, the study seeks to fill a critical gap in the literature and contribute to the improvement of flexible learning systems in similar educational settings.

Research Questions

This study aimed to explore the experiences in the implementation of the Open High School System of Saint Paul University Surigao while looking through the lens of students and stakeholders.

Literature Review

This part contains the review of related literature connected with the present study to further enhance understanding of the lived experiences of students and stakeholders in the implementation of the Open High School System at Saint Paul University Surigao.

This study recalls the 1987 Philippine Constitution which states that "The state shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make education accessible for all."

To address this, the Republic Act 10665 was created on the 28th of July 2014.

The Open High School System Act, also known as Republic Act 10665, was implemented in the Philippines as part of the Department of Education's alternative system program of secondary education. The program is available to all public or private secondary schools

that are interested in implementing it and can satisfy the necessary criteria. These include submitting a letter of intent to the school's division superintendent, with copies sent to the Regional Office and the Director of the Bureau of Secondary Education. Schools that provide learning facilities and equipment in areas such as the library, computer room, laboratory, and school must participate in a capacity building program to prepare for accreditation. It is also essential to collaborate with the community to guarantee that students have access to resources that facilitate their self-directed learning, including the public library, barangay learning center, internet café, and public sporting facilities (Ayubu, 2022).

Open High School System (OHSS)

In the Philippines, the 1987 Philippine Constitution stipulates that "The State shall safeguard and advance the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall implement measures to ensure that education is accessible to all." It is unequivocally stated that all public schools, regardless of their level, are required to offer free education to all students. However, there are certain observations that suggest not all Filipinos are able to obtain an education due to their circumstances and life status, despite this mandate. Additionally, other institutions do not implement this program due to their concerns regarding teacher salaries, particularly in private schools where funding for this initiative is inadequate.

In order to address this issue, Republic Act 10665 was established on July 28, 2014. An act that establishes the Open High School System (OHSS) with the objective of offering free and flexible education to open learners. This legislation will be accessible to all youth and adults who have completed elementary education, as well as high school qualifiers of the Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) and the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Test (Cruz & Vargas, 2021).

Additionally, OHSP has been instrumental in helping students continue their education despite personal or financial difficulties. However, disparities in access to resources, such as internet connectivity and technology, continue to be barriers, particularly in rural areas. Evaluations suggest addressing these disparities is key to improving program outcomes (Timula, 2022).

According to Andika (2022), The Dropout Reduction Program, which was implemented by the program, is designed to accomplish the following objectives; to ensure that all elementary graduates, high school dropouts, and successful examinees of the Philippine Educational Placement Test have the opportunity to complete their secondary education. To avert prospective school dropouts and motivate those who are not currently attending school to complete their secondary education. In order to decrease the number of high school graduates and increase the participation rate (Andika, 2022), it is imperative to improve the achievement rate by offering high-quality distance education.

Furthermore, research by SEAMEO INNOTECH highlights that OHSP in the Philippines aims to address dropout rates by providing alternative learning pathways. However, challenges persist, such as inconsistent module quality, teacher preparedness, and limited technological resources. Best practices, like consistent monitoring and support from educational agencies, have been documented to improve program delivery (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2017).

Students enrolled in OHSS frequently appreciate the flexibility it offers, which enables them to reconcile their personal responsibilities with their academic pursuits. Nevertheless, obstacles such as the necessity of self-discipline and restricted access to educational resources are widespread. Lagrio et al. (2022) conducted a study that demonstrated that students encountered challenges in comprehending modules in the absence of direct teacher interaction, resulting in a decline in motivation and engagement.

Internationally, alternative education systems that parallel the OHSP have emphasized integrating technology to overcome resource and engagement challenges. A UNESCO report (2021) illustrated how digital tools enhance learning experiences in distance education. Countries like Thailand and Malaysia have implemented similar programs with significant success by using online platforms to bridge the gap between educators and learners. The findings underscore that digital literacy and access to ICT are essential for both teachers and students in maximizing the effectiveness of such systems.

The Open High School System (OHSP) in the Philippines, particularly at Saint Paul University Surigao (SPUS), has been designed to address the educational needs of students who are unable to attend traditional schooling due to various challenges. Studies conducted in the past five to seven years have highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of this program. For instance, SEAMEO INNOTECH (2017) emphasized how the OHSP serves as a vital intervention in reducing dropout rates, offering flexible education pathways for learners in marginalized settings. However, issues such as inconsistent module quality, limited teacher preparation, and the absence of robust monitoring systems have been identified as barriers to effective implementation.

To address these challenges, Saint Paul University - Surigao has taken significant strides to enhance the OHSP experience. For the past two years, SPUS has gone beyond the traditional printed materials by implementing daily face-to-face classes for students under the Open High School Program. These classes provide two hours of instruction per course subject, strategically designed to integrate the four learning stations of the Paulinian ReFlex approach.

While these face-to-face sessions are limited to half-day schedules, covering two subject areas per day, the approach allows OHSP students to experience a structured and interactive educational environment similar to that of regular students. This setup ensures a balanced blend of flexibility and academic rigor, addressing the unique needs of OHSP learners while fostering holistic development.

Experiences of Parents

Parents are often regarded as key drivers behind the movement for inclusive education in numerous countries. Consequently, many studies have explored the perspectives of parents of both children with and without disabilities regarding inclusive education (de Boer et al.,2010).

A child's disposition towards education and learning is significantly shaped by their parents as primary carers. Parental involvement in school correlates with favorable outcomes for students regarding academic performance, conduct, and social development. Consequently, parents are required to engage as active members in the school community beyond conventional forms of involvement, such as attending parent-teacher conferences or assisting with homework.

A meta-analysis by Wilder released in 2014 indicates that parental participation is most beneficial when there is collaboration between teachers and administrators. Schools can promote collaboration by establishing clear communication lines, providing training on parenting skills, and involving parents in decision-making processes. Schools may establish parent advisory committees or solicit parental involvement in school improvement planning. Engaging parents as active collaborators in their children's education enables schools to enhance home-school ties and cultivate a more favorable learning atmosphere for all pupils.

According to Hu et al. (2020) as cited by Saragih et al. (2024), interactions children build in the beginning considerably impact their ongoing emotional and social growth, and their relationship with their parents is the most important and impactful among these ties. Parental involvement is critical in ensuring the success of OHSP. Parents often act as co-educators, helping students manage modular learning schedules and monitoring progress. Research by Timula (2022) during the pandemic revealed that parents had to navigate additional responsibilities, often without adequate guidance from schools. This highlights the need for stronger communication channels between schools and families to ensure alignment in supporting student learning. Additionally, teachers require professional development to adapt to the distinct demands of non-traditional teaching, such as modular and remote methods, which were magnified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Experiences of Teachers

Educators should be aware of and vigilant for signs of disengagement in the Open High School Program modality, and they should take action to maximize engagement and support for at-risk students during COVID-19 (Wardhana et al., 2022; Dasig et al., 2017; Pahayahay et al., 2017).

According to Gupta (2023) as cited by Cena & Corpuz (2024), the significance of training facilitators has grown significantly in the constantly changing realm of education and the enhancement of professional competencies. These proficient individuals connect instructional content and efficient learning encounters, guaranteeing that learners comprehend the material and implement it in real-life situations. As agents that stimulate interactive and captivating training sessions, facilitators possess the ability to convert monotonous lessons into dynamic expeditions of exploration.

Additionally, according to Roorda et al. (2017), trust, respect, and open communication are the foundations of the relationships between teachers and students. Strong teacher-student relationships are linked to increased levels of engagement and reduced disruptive behavior. Teachers who consistently offer support and exhibit empathy establish a classroom environment that encourages emotional development and learning.

The teacher-adviser is responsible for guiding students in their duties, facilitating access to educational resources, directing independent learning tasks, monitoring progress, referring students to relevant subject teachers when needed, and maintaining thorough documentation of student achievements. Likewise, the subject teacher assists students in recognizing their educational needs, formulates their self-directed learning plans as illustrated in the accompanying handbook, allocates consultation time to rectify learning deficiencies, assesses their progress, provides feedback, maintains comprehensive records of their achievements, and notifies the Teacher-Adviser of the student's accomplishments.

As a result, the efficacy of the OHSP program implementation in the Philippines is significantly influenced by the extent to which instructors understand and implement the curriculum (Bongco & David, 2020).

Experiences of Students

In light of the students, according to Kong (2008), it is generally believed that classroom learning experiences of students very much influence their overall academic development. Students dedicate a minimum of one-fourth of their waking hours to school (Hamre & Pianta, 2010), establishing it as a significant environment that profoundly influences youth development (Eccles & Roeser, 2011).

The impact of education is partially defined by the emotions students encounter in the academic environment: Academic and social emotions encountered in school forecast students' attention, motivation, academic achievement, relationships, health, and overall well-being (Brackett & Rivers, 2012; Kochanska et al., 2000; Pekrun et al., 2002). Consequently, students' emotional experiences at school and various psychosocial elements undoubtedly significantly influence the effects of school attendance on juvenile development. The emotions kids experience at school, such as delight against boredom and optimism versus discouragement, impact their academic achievement (Pekrun et al., 2002).

In a separate study, Mitra (2018) also discovered that students experience a stronger sense of connection to their institutions when they take on leadership roles, such as serving on school councils or participating in decision-making processes. Through these opportunities, students can cultivate positive relationships with their peers, reduce conflict, and promote inclusion, thereby contributing to a positive environment.

Furthermore, social-emotional learning (SEL) has gained popularity as a method of enhancing the atmosphere of schools. Students acquire the emotional intelligence necessary to negotiate the intricacies of school life through SEL programs that emphasize empathy, self-regulation, and problem-solving, as per Jones and Kahn (2017). These skills have the potential to reduce harassing incidents and establish a more supportive learning environment, in addition to enhancing relationships.

Despite all of these, certain cases exists where things are out of the students control. For example, in a study of Cruz & Vargas (2021), Grade 11 has fewer students currently enrolled in the OHSP, reasons from their study suggests that students cannot attend or enroll further due to health problems, and family separation. Part of their study also revealed that majority of the OHSP learners come from a family with unstable jobs. Further analysis revealed that most of their parents are working as a farm hand or has a small-scale business.

Synthesis. The cited pieces of literature underscore the importance of the Open High School System (OHSS) in promoting accessible education, reducing dropout rates, and fostering inclusivity, while also noting challenges such as module quality, technological barriers, and teacher readiness. This study focuses on SPUS's unique OHSS implementation, integrating the Paulinian ReFlex learning approach (independent, collaborative, and teacher-directed learning stations, plus assessment) with daily face-to-face sessions. Unlike traditional modular setups, SPUS combines flexibility with interactive teaching to enhance engagement and holistic development.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a qualitative research framework, specifically employing Colaizzi's Descriptive Phenomenological Approach, guided by a set of validated interview questions. This research design was deemed appropriate as it allowed for an in-depth exploration and rich description of the experiences of students, parents, and teachers involved in the implementation of the Open High School System at Saint Paul University Surigao. Phenomenology was suitable for this study because it seeks to understand how individuals perceive, interpret, and make meaning of their experiences—insights that are essential in evaluating the effectiveness, challenges, and impact of the OHSS from multiple stakeholder perspectives.

Participants

The informants for this study consisted of students and parents from Grades 7 to 10 who were enrolled in the Open High School Program for the academic year 2024–2025. Additionally, the study included teachers who handled subject areas within the program. They were chosen as informants because they had firsthand experiences and direct involvement in the implementation and participation of the Open High School System. Their perspectives were essential in providing comprehensive insights into the challenges, benefits, and overall effectiveness of the program from the viewpoints of learners, guardians, and educators.

Table 1. *Summary of Informants*

Student	Teacher	Parents
13	7	5

Instrument

The primary instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide developed to gather in-depth insights into the experiences of students, parents, and teachers involved in the implementation of the Open High School System (OHSS) at Saint Paul University Surigao. The guide consisted of open-ended questions focusing on key areas such as learning experiences, parental involvement, teaching strategies, and program challenges. It was validated by field experts to ensure relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study's objectives. Follow-up questions were also asked during the interviews to further explore the informants' experiences and provide richer, more contextual data.

Procedure

The researcher developed guide questions to explore the experiences of parents, teachers, and students regarding the study. A formal letter requesting permission to conduct the study was sent to the Basic Education Principal of the institution. Upon approval, the researcher distributed consent letters to the informants, ensuring prior notice and their voluntary agreement to participate in the data-gathering process. The researcher provided a brief overview of the study. The purpose of the interview was explained, emphasizing that the study aimed to explore the lived experiences of students and stakeholders regarding the implementation of the OHSS at SPUS. The respondents were informed that participation was voluntary, responses would be kept confidential, and they could withdraw at any time. Verbal or written consent was obtained before proceeding. The study primarily explored the experiences of students and stakeholders on the implementation of the Open High School Program of Saint Paul University Surigao (SPUS) through interviews

using guide questions, which were recorded and personally transcribed by the researcher. To ensure confidentiality, informants were coded to maintain anonymity throughout the study.
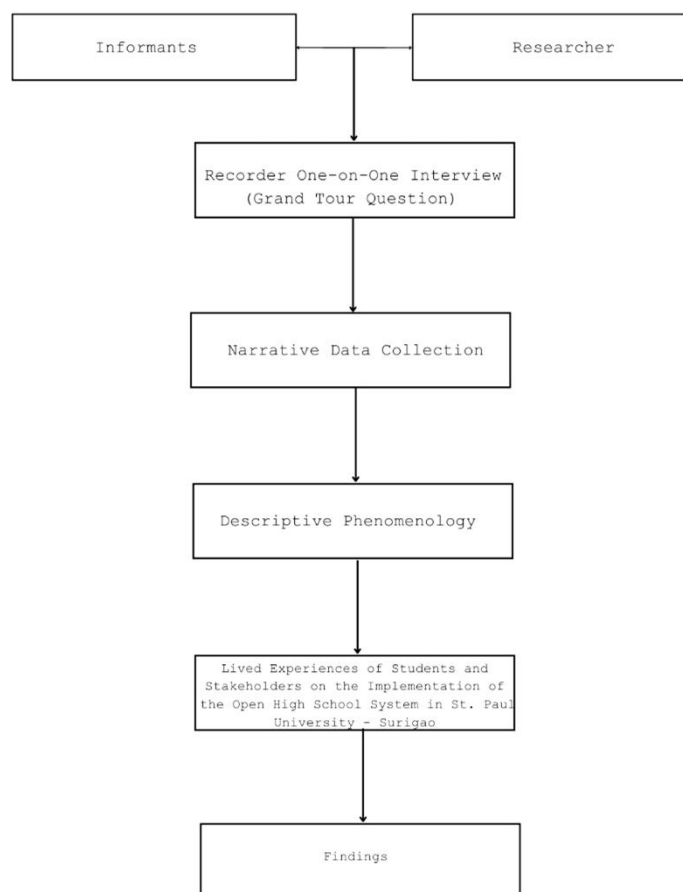

Figure 1. *Flow of the Study*

Data Analysis

The collected data from the experiences of students and stakeholders on the implementation of the Open High School System of Saint Paul University Surigao (SPUS) were analyzed following Colaizzi's (1978) strategy for phenomenological data analysis. After the Verbatim Transcription, the following steps of the Colaizzi process for phenomenological data analysis were followed:

Each transcript should be read and re-read in order to obtain a general sense of the whole content. During this stage, the researcher explored the phenomenon as experienced by the informants themselves, regardless of any thoughts, feelings, or ideas that may have arisen from the researcher.

For each transcript, significant statements that pertained to the phenomenon under study were extracted and recorded on a separate sheet, noting their page and line numbers. In this stage of analysis, significant statements and phrases pertaining to the experiences of parents, teachers, and students on the implementation of the OHSS were extracted from the transcripts. These statements were written on a separate sheet and coded based on their "transcript, page, and line numbers."

Meanings should be formulated from these significant statements. Each underlying meaning will be coded in one category as they reflect an exhaustive description. The researcher will compare the formulated meanings with the original meanings maintaining the consistency of descriptions.

The formulated meanings should be sorted into categories, clusters of themes, and themes. After reaching an agreement on all the formulated meanings, the process of grouping all these formulated meanings into categories that reflected a unique structure of clusters of themes was initiated. Each cluster of themes was coded to include all formulated meanings related to that group of meanings. After that, groups of clusters of themes that reflected a particular vision or issue were incorporated together to form a distinctive construct of theme. The accuracy of the themes was then checked with the assistance of an expert researcher in qualitative research.

The findings of the study should be integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under study. After merging all the study themes, the whole structure of the phenomenon was extracted. Thereafter, the researcher sought an expert to review the findings

in terms of richness and completeness, in order to provide sufficient description and to confirm that the exhaustive description reflected the experiences of parents, teachers, and students in the implementation of OHSS in SPUS.

The fundamental structure of the phenomenon should be described. In this step, a reduction of findings was done, in which redundant, misused, or overestimated descriptions were removed from the overall structure.

Finally, the validation of the findings should be sought from the research informants to compare the researcher's descriptive results with their experiences. This stage included returning the research findings to the informants and discussing the results with them. This step was done by the researcher to obtain the informants' approval in advance for the defense.
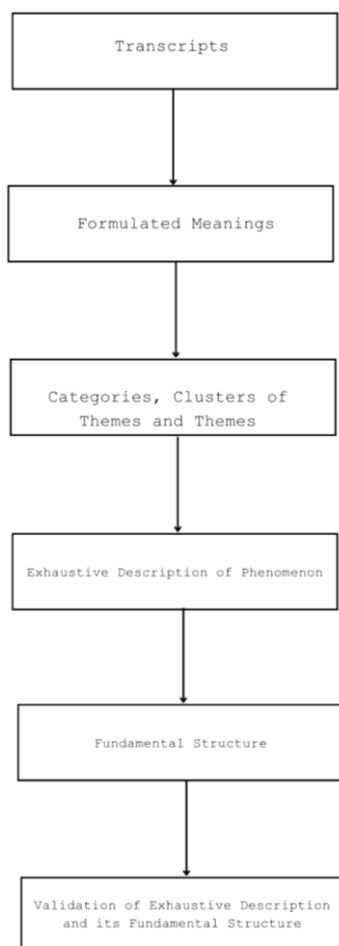
Figure 2. *Process of Descriptive Phenomenological Data Analysis According to Colaizzi of 1978*

Ethical Considerations

Furthermore, the researcher strictly observed ethical considerations throughout the conduct of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informants were not coerced into joining the interviews. Their privacy and confidentiality were carefully safeguarded, ensuring that their identities remained anonymous in all stages of data collection and reporting. Additionally, informed consent was obtained from all participants, either personally or through virtual communication, prior to the interviews, ensuring that they fully understood the purpose and scope of the research before taking part.

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings and discussions of the study. The results of the analysis will offer insights about the lived experiences of students and stakeholders in the implementation of the Open High School System at Saint Paul University Surigao, synthesized through a thematic map of the informants' experiences.

The findings of the data gathered from the informants followed Colaizzi's (1978) Strategy in Phenomenological Data Analysis. All the transcriptions of the participants were read repeatedly and thoroughly by the researcher to obtain a full understanding of the informants' revelations during the data gathering procedure.

Significant statements were extracted from the interview transcripts regarding the desired research phenomenon. These statements were written in separate sheets and coded based on their "transcripts, page, and line numbers".

Table 17 (see Appendix A) provides the extracted and identified significant statements from the interview transcripts.

Meanings were then formulated from the identified significant statement. Each underlying meaning was coded in one category as it reflects an exhaustive description. Similarly, the researchers compared the formulated meanings with the original meanings, maintaining the consistency of descriptions. The whole statements and their meaning were checked by an expert researcher who found the process is correct and the meanings are consistent.

Table 18 (Appendix B) provides how significant statements were converted into formulated meanings.

The statements identified as significant from the interview transcripts relate to the experiences of students and stakeholders on the implementation of the Open High School System in Saint Paul University Surigao. These experiences display richness and variation of responses coming from the three (3) major pillars of the program.

The informants' responses described how they felt and experience while being in the Open High School System. Their experiences under the program molded the informants' attitude towards learning, the way they deal with people and cope with the challenges of day-to-day living.

After having an agreement toward all the formulated meanings, the formulated meanings were grouped into categories that reflect a unique structure of cluster of themes. Each cluster of themes was coded to include all formulated meanings related to that group of meanings. After that, groups of clusters of themes that reflect a particular vision issue were incorporated together to form a distinctive construct of theme.

Later, the researcher, compared the cluster of themes and checked the accuracy of the overall thematic map, having assistance from the expert researcher in qualitative research.

Twenty-three (23) theme clusters emerged which were grouped later into fourteen (14) emergent themes. Table 19 (Appendix C) shows the process of constructing the themes through integrating various cluster of themes.

Table 2. *Responsible and Committed Voluntary Instruction for Open High School Students*

Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
Responsible and committed voluntary instruction for Open High School students - Teachers	The informants shared their efforts in delivering quality instruction voluntarily in the Open High School

This encapsulates the dedication, adaptability, and strong sense of duty demonstrated by teachers involved in the Open High School Program (OHSP), despite the absence of formal obligations or additional compensation. Informants described how they actively navigated complex teaching schedules and student attendance challenges—often without institutional flexibility—yet remained committed to ensuring learning continued meaningfully.

This sense of responsibility is reflected in how teachers took initiative to enhance their pedagogical strategies, such as designing interactive PowerPoint presentations and incorporating fun, engaging activities and experiments. These efforts were aimed at sustaining student interest and comprehension, especially in a flexible learning setup where traditional classroom routines were not always present.

Moreover, their commitment extended beyond classroom instruction. Informants noted their willingness to share knowledge and collaborate with co-teachers, indicating a professional community built on mutual learning and support. This demonstrates that their voluntary service was not just limited to instructional tasks but was also rooted in collegial growth and a shared vision for student development.

Despite scheduling conflicts—especially when juggling duties between the OHSP and their primary teaching assignments (e.g., with Grade 1 students)—teachers continually made efforts to prioritize their responsibilities toward OHSP learners. The emotional and mental dilemma of choosing between classes underscores the weight of their commitment, as they often found themselves torn between multiple obligations but still chose to honor their roles within the OHSP.

Ultimately, their motivation stems not from obligation, but from an intrinsic passion for teaching and a sincere desire to make a difference in the lives of their students. Teaching in the OHSP, for these educators, transcends a mere professional duty—it becomes a calling. This highlights how voluntary teaching in such programs is sustained not only by professionalism, but by a profound sense of purpose, personal advocacy for education, and a genuine care for learner success.

This further underscore the profound dedication and moral commitment of teachers who engage in the Open High School Program (OHSP) in the Philippines, despite limited institutional support, irregular student attendance, and competing responsibilities. Teachers consistently demonstrate an intrinsic motivation to teach—not because they are compelled by policy or rewarded financially—but because they believe in their role as facilitators of learning for all, particularly for marginalized or at-risk students.

Informants reported that even when only two or three students attend a scheduled class, they still proceed with lesson delivery, prepare instructional materials, and provide individualized support. This is a clear manifestation of voluntary commitment—teaching without expecting immediate recognition or compensation, and continuing despite the challenges of fluctuating attendance and limited resources. The act of "showing up" for the learners, regardless of number or circumstance, speaks to the teacher's sense of gabay (guidance) and malasakit (deep concern), which are culturally rooted values in the Filipino educational ethos.

This dedication aligns with the values promoted by the Department of Education (DepEd), particularly in the context of Alternative Delivery Modes (ADMs), including the OHSP. According to DepEd Order No. 74, s. 2010, OHSP aims to "retain potential dropouts and encourage out-of-school youth to return to school," and its success heavily depends on the willingness of teachers to adjust, innovate, and commit beyond what is required. Teachers essentially become the backbone of the program, often sacrificing personal time and navigating conflicting schedules just to ensure continuity of learning.

A domestic example can be drawn from the Open High School implementation in various DepEd divisions such as in Region IV-A (CALABARZON), where teachers have publicly shared their challenges and accomplishments during Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions. In one such session, a teacher from Batangas City National High School shared that despite the unpredictable attendance, she consistently prepares lessons and coordinates with parents and guardians to keep students engaged (DepEd CALABARZON, LAC Session Reports, 2021). This mirrors the informants' reflections in your study, where commitment is not measured by student turnout but by the teacher's ongoing willingness to teach.

Moreover, the Filipino concept of "bayanihan" can be observed in this context—not in its traditional form of communal labor, but in the modern educational sense where teachers work voluntarily and collectively for the benefit of learners, particularly those who face systemic disadvantages. This includes sharing strategies with colleagues, creating digital and printed materials from their own resources, and continually adapting to the needs of both regular and OHSP students.

In conclusion, responsible and committed voluntary instruction within OHSP is not merely a functional response to a teaching assignment—it is a reflection of Filipino educators' deep ethical responsibility, passion, and cultural values. Their perseverance exemplifies how the success of inclusive education programs like the OHSP rests heavily on the shoulders of dedicated teachers who uphold the right to education for all learners, regardless of how many show up or how challenging the conditions may be.

Table 3. *Adaptive and Flexible Teaching Strategies for Open High School Students*

Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
Adaptive and flexible teaching strategies for Open High School students.	The informants shared their efforts in delivering quality instruction voluntarily in the Open High School The informants expressed that the teaching in the Open High School is a rewarding and challenging experience, which demands flexibility and the ability to adapt to students' learning levels.

The emerging theme reflects the deliberate and thoughtful efforts of teachers in modifying their teaching approaches to meet the diverse learning needs, interests, and contexts of students enrolled in the Open High School Program (OHSP). This theme is grounded in the recognition that conventional, rigid teaching methods may not be effective for learners in a non-traditional, modular, or blended learning environment. As such, teachers embrace adaptability and flexibility as essential elements in promoting learner engagement and academic success.

Informants shared how they adjusted the language used during instruction to ensure that lesson content is easily understood by students. This sensitivity to learners' comprehension levels reflects not only linguistic flexibility but also a commitment to equity in learning. Teachers also highlighted their need to become more creative and resourceful in delivering lessons—incorporating diverse strategies to sustain student attention and make abstract concepts more accessible.

Flexibility was also evident in the differentiated assessment practices applied by teachers. Rather than enforcing uniform performance tasks, they allowed students to choose outputs aligned with their interests and strengths. This learner-centered approach empowers students, fosters autonomy, and reduces performance anxiety, especially in a setup where learning conditions vary widely.

Furthermore, the informants emphasized the importance of transparency in academic performance. By regularly updating students on their grades and scores, teachers foster a culture of accountability and motivation. Immediate feedback, as mentioned by one informant, plays a vital role in encouraging students to reflect on their work and take ownership of their learning progress. The prompt checking and discussion of outputs also ensure that students receive timely support, which is crucial in asynchronous learning environments.

Lastly, discussing key details and instructions with clarity and consistency is another adaptive practice that teachers employed. Ensuring that students grasp essential information helps maintain instructional coherence and supports independent learning.

Overall, this theme demonstrates how OHSP teachers go beyond static lesson delivery. They actively shape their methods based on students' evolving needs, acknowledging that flexibility and responsiveness are critical in non-traditional learning environments. Through creative strategies, inclusive assessments, timely feedback, and student-centered practices, these teachers exemplify adaptive professionalism that ensures learning remains meaningful, engaging, and effective despite systemic constraints.

On the other hand, this further unfolds in the teachers' testimonies of day-to-day adjustments they make to ensure learning continuity and accessibility in a challenging educational context. Teaching in the Open High School Program (OHSP) demands more than subject matter expertise; it requires educators to remain open-minded, creative, and deeply responsive to students' unique circumstances, learning paces, and comprehension levels.

Informants repeatedly emphasized the importance of modifying language use—shifting to simpler terms and even switching between languages—to bridge comprehension gaps. This strategic code-switching and simplification not only aid students in understanding academic content, but also affirm the teacher's role in removing linguistic barriers that could hinder engagement and retention. For many learners in OHSP, who often juggle academic responsibilities with external obligations, such accessibility is key to meaningful participation.

Teachers also spoke of their efforts to simplify lessons and tailor content to real-life applications. This strategy serves two purposes: it enhances student comprehension and reinforces relevance, helping learners see the practical value of their education. The goal is not merely to transmit information but to make learning transformative and applicable to everyday life.

Class size was another factor that contributed positively to this flexibility. Smaller groups allowed teachers to provide individualized support and materials, whether through personal provision or laboratory resources. Such conditions fostered closer teacher-student interactions, enabling more direct feedback, increased opportunities for practice, and better monitoring of each learner's progress.

Moreover, teachers described the importance of content recall in subsequent meetings to accommodate students who were absent—a deliberate practice of inclusion and academic continuity. Rather than penalizing students for absences, teachers adapt their instruction by reviewing previous content, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to catch up.

A consistent theme across the narratives is the necessity of being proactive. Teachers noted that they often had to seek out their own teaching resources and develop personalized strategies, rather than relying on institutional support. This self-initiative is a clear demonstration of professional commitment and flexibility in action.

The educators acknowledged that while the OHSP presents significant challenges—such as language barriers, inconsistent attendance, and gaps in prior knowledge—it is also rewarding. The adaptability they develop and apply becomes not just a teaching technique, but a mindset grounded in empathy, resilience, and dedication to inclusive education.

In essence, adaptive and flexible teaching in the OHSP is not a temporary measure, but a sustained and intentional approach. It is driven by the teacher's deep awareness of the realities their students face and the unwavering commitment to meet those realities with compassion, creativity, and instructional agility.

Table 4. *Emotional and Mental Strain on Teachers*

Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
Emotional and Mental Strain on Teachers	The informant expressed communication is challenging since students are not interactive.

This reflects the real and complex difficulties teachers face when implementing the Open High School Program (OHSP). Educators often encounter problems such as poor student motivation, irregular attendance, varying learning speeds, and limited interaction—factors that hinder the creation of an effective and supportive learning environment.

Teachers shared that communication with students is often minimal, with many learners not responding or participating actively. This challenge echoes the Department of Education's (2010) emphasis on the need for more personalized teaching approaches in the OHSP, given the students' unique backgrounds and learning situations. Low student motivation and lack of consistent participation make it harder for teachers to maintain continuity in lessons and ensure that learning objectives are achieved.

In addition, teachers find it challenging to determine which teaching strategies work best due to students' diverse academic levels and interests. This wide range of learner needs requires teachers to constantly adjust their methods, which can be both demanding and exhausting. The difficulty is made worse when students struggle to understand the lessons—often because of gaps in their foundational knowledge. This concern has also been raised in DepEd Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, particularly in CALABARZON and Region VIII, where teachers noted that inconsistent student attendance contributes to widening learning gaps (DepEd CALABARZON, 2021; DepEd Region VIII, 2022).

Since teaching in OHSP is often voluntary, many teachers receive limited support or incentives, further complicating their ability to engage students effectively. Despite these limitations, teachers continue to give their best. Still, their efforts are often constrained by factors outside the classroom—such as students' household responsibilities, financial challenges, and limited access to technology,

especially in more remote areas (De Guzman & Uy, 2018).

For instance, a study by De Guzman and Uy (2018) documented the experiences of OHSP teachers in rural Northern Luzon. They found that very few students attended regular classes, often due to work or family duties. Although teachers tried to adjust by offering modular learning and flexible schedules, low attendance continued to be a major barrier to student engagement.

Furthermore, the preceding table discusses more on another emergent theme on the Minimal Community Involvement in Education.

Table 5. *Minimal Community Involvement in Education*

Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
Minimal Community involvement in Education	The informant mentions how the community should take part in support of student engagement and enroll.
	The informants mention how the community influence and perceive students under the OHSS

Community underscores the vital role that families, local stakeholders, and the broader community play in supporting the implementation and sustainability of the Open High School Program (OHSP). One of the informants highlighted the importance of encouraging community members to enroll or participate in the program, recognizing that education is not solely the responsibility of schools but a shared commitment.

Community involvement in education, especially within alternative delivery modes like OHSP, creates a support system that reinforces students' motivation and retention. Engaged communities help promote awareness of the program's purpose and benefits, especially to out-of-school youth, working students, and other non-traditional learners. The active promotion of OHSP within local neighborhoods increases the chances of student recruitment, participation, and success.

This aligns with the Department of Education's push for stakeholder engagement as outlined in its Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (DepEd, 2020), which emphasizes partnerships with parents, guardians, barangay officials, and civil society organizations. These partnerships are crucial for reaching underserved learners and ensuring that educational interventions like OHSP respond to community-specific needs.

Moreover, community involvement enhances the relevance and accessibility of education. When barangays, parent associations, and local leaders understand the challenges and goals of programs like OHSP, they become more invested in ensuring students receive the time, space, and encouragement to continue their studies—even outside the traditional school setting. In some regions, LGUs (local government units) have partnered with schools to provide learning spaces, support materials, and basic needs for OHSP students, which directly contributes to improving their learning experiences (DepEd CALABARZON, 2021).

Ultimately, building strong community-school relationships strengthens educational outcomes by fostering shared responsibility. This cooperative approach not only sustains enrollment but also promotes a culture that values learning and inclusion, especially for students in alternative education pathways like OHSP.

Table 6. *Improving Open High School Instruction through Integration*

Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
Improving Open High School instruction through integration	The informant suggests integrating Open High School students into regular classes

This reflects a potential approach to addressing some of the challenges faced by students in the Open High School Program (OHSP) by blending them into the regular classroom setting. One informant proposed the idea of merging OHSP students with their peers in the traditional school environment, suggesting that this integration would help overcome some barriers to learning and foster greater socialization opportunities.

This approach aims to counteract the isolation that often characterizes alternative delivery modes like OHSP. Students enrolled in OHSP frequently face social and academic challenges due to the lack of peer interactions, which can hinder their social development and reduce motivation. The proposal for integration seeks to address these issues by creating an environment where OHSP students are exposed to the same learning experiences and social contexts as regular high school students. By doing so, it is hoped that students would benefit from the peer support, academic collaboration, and socialization that are often integral to a student's overall educational experience.

Research and educational practices have long highlighted the importance of socialization in academic achievement. According to Orbeta (2018), integrating learners from different backgrounds into a single learning environment has the potential to foster a sense of belonging, reduce feelings of marginalization, and encourage peer-led learning. This aligns with the informant's suggestion that the majority of OHSP students be integrated into regular classes to ensure that they are not limited in terms of building social connections.

From a pedagogical perspective, integrating OHSP students with their regular counterparts could also foster collaborative learning. It allows students to benefit from diverse learning styles, encouraging both academic and emotional growth. Moreover, it allows teachers to adapt their instructional practices to cater to a wider range of learning needs in a single class, which can enhance overall teaching effectiveness (DepEd, 2020). However, the integration process must be implemented carefully, considering the readiness of both students and educators to adapt to a more inclusive learning environment.

Table 7. *Intrinsic Fulfillment Through Student Progress and Resilience in Alternative Learning Contexts*

Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
Intrinsic Fulfillment Through Student Progress and Resilience in Alternative Learning Contexts	The informant finds teaching in the Open High School rewarding despite the challenges.

This emergent theme reflects the rewarding aspect of teaching within the Open High School Program (OHSP) despite the various obstacles and difficulties that educators face. Despite the numerous challenges—such as irregular attendance, students' varying learning paces, and the need for continuous adaptation in teaching strategies—teachers find fulfillment in witnessing their students succeed and grow.

An informant emphasized that the most fulfilling aspect of teaching in OHSP is seeing students' progress, even if it takes them longer to complete tasks compared to their peers in regular classrooms. This highlights the intrinsic satisfaction that educators derive from witnessing their students' achievements, no matter how gradual or delayed. This sense of accomplishment, according to the informant, is amplified by the realization that, despite the difficulties, the effort put into adapting lessons, managing individual students' needs, and offering constant support does make a difference in students' academic growth.

Research supports this sentiment by noting that educators in alternative education settings, such as OHSP, often experience a deeper sense of satisfaction when they see students overcome the hurdles associated with non-traditional learning environments (Saylor & Alexander, 2015). The unique context of OHSP, where students may be balancing work, family obligations, and education, requires teachers to be flexible, resourceful, and persistent. The success stories that emerge from this challenging dynamic become more meaningful and rewarding, not because of ease, but because they symbolize resilience and growth—both for the students and the teachers.

Additionally, the informant's reflection points to the emotional and psychological rewards of teaching in an alternative educational setting. Teachers in OHSP may not always see immediate results, but the long-term success of their students provides a sense of fulfillment that transcends the day-to-day challenges. This sense of fulfillment is often reinforced by the bonds teachers form with their students. Despite the limited interaction in some cases, teachers often go the extra mile to ensure that students succeed. These small but significant moments of success reinforce the belief that their efforts are not in vain.

This theme also speaks to the importance of persistence and patience in teaching. Teachers who work with OHSP students often find themselves adjusting their expectations and timelines, understanding that success in these settings takes time. However, when students succeed—whether by passing a difficult exam, completing an assignment they struggled with, or making progress in their personal lives—educators experience a profound sense of accomplishment that brings meaning to their work.

Ultimately, finding fulfillment amid the challenges of teaching in OHSP is rooted in the understanding that every step forward, no matter how small, contributes to the students' growth. This recognition of progress, paired with the emotional rewards that come from helping students succeed, provides teachers with a sense of purpose and satisfaction in their roles, even amid adversity.

Table 8. *Unsustainable Use of Personal Resources to Motivate Learner*

Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
Unsustainable Use of Personal Resources to Motivate Learner	The informants shares that rewards like snacks motivate students to learn.

Utilizing rewards such as snacks to enhance student motivation is an established and effective strategy in educational settings.

The use of snacks as incentives appeals to students because they provide immediate gratification, an essential aspect of motivating students in the classroom. By using snacks, educators create a supportive learning environment that motivates students to participate more actively, particularly in activities they might otherwise find less stimulating.

Furthermore, the anticipation of receiving a snack can increase enthusiasm for attending class, reducing distractions and improving focus. Students who receive rewards for demonstrating appropriate behaviors are more likely to continue those behaviors, contributing to a productive and well-managed classroom environment. In this way, snacks help manage classroom dynamics and motivate students to adhere to both academic and behavioral expectations.

While snacks and small rewards have proven helpful in encouraging participation and motivating Open High School Program (OHSP) students, they often come at the teacher's personal expense. Several informants noted that incentives like food, tokens, or school supplies can temporarily boost student attendance and engagement. However, this practice places a financial strain on teachers, especially since

OHSP instruction is often voluntary and lacks sufficient institutional support. A study by the Philippine Business for Education (PBEd, 2023) reported that many teachers spend their own money on classroom materials and incentives due to limited school funding, which adds to their already heavy workloads.

Moreover, according to a 2024 report by Rappler, public school teachers across the country often shoulder costs for instructional materials and learner rewards, which include snacks and activity prizes, without any official reimbursement (Rappler, 2024). These efforts, though well-meaning, can lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout, as echoed in the findings of Aquino and Reyes (2021), who emphasized the link between excessive financial burden and teacher demoralization in low-resource educational settings.

Over time, the expectation to fill motivational and engagement gaps using personal resources contributes to feelings of frustration and being undervalued. Orbeta and Paqueo (2019) also noted that such burdens are more pronounced in alternative learning systems like OHSP, where teachers face both financial and emotional strains. This theme highlights a deeper systemic issue in the OHSP framework—underscoring the need for more sustainable, institutionally supported strategies to maintain student motivation and ensure teacher well-being.

Furthermore, the table below presents the emergent theme 'Challenges of Teaching without Prior Content Knowledge and Skills,' highlighting the specific difficulties educators encounter when assigned to teach unfamiliar subjects without adequate preparation or training.

Table 9. *Challenges of Teaching without Prior Content Knowledge and Skills*

Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
Challenges of teaching without prior content knowledge and skills	The informant admits to having difficulty teaching due to having no prior knowledge and skills in the subject matter.
	The informant mentions not having appropriate learning resources for his subject matter.

The emergent theme of challenges of teaching without prior content knowledge and skills reflects the significant difficulties faced by educators who are required to teach subjects in which they may lack expertise or proficiency. This scenario often arises in various educational settings, especially when teachers are assigned to teach courses outside their area of specialization, such as in the case of the informant teaching MAPEH (Music, Arts, PE, and Health) without prior knowledge or talent in the subject. This situation presents unique challenges, both for the teacher's professional development and for students' learning experiences.

Teaching without prior content knowledge can lead to feelings of inadequacy and stress for teachers. A teacher's content knowledge always directly impacts and influences the quality of their instruction. When teachers lack deep subject knowledge, they often struggle to deliver precise explanations, simplify complex topics, or effectively respond to student inquiries. This deficit can reduce their confidence and hinder their ability to design engaging, meaningful lessons that make the content accessible and compelling to learners (She et al., 2025). In the case of the informant, who lacks talent in painting, this lack of prior knowledge may lead to frustration and uncertainty, which can further hinder her ability to teach the content with enthusiasm and authority.

Moreover, teachers who must teach subjects without prior content knowledge may experience a heavy workload due to the need to invest time in learning the material themselves. As the informant admitted, she must learn the lessons under the course to be able to teach them to her students. This additional responsibility can contribute to feelings of burnout, especially when teachers already face the pressures of managing classrooms, grading, and fulfilling other duties (Kaufman, 2011). The need to balance both learning the content and teaching it simultaneously can result in less effective teaching and increased stress, which can ultimately affect both the teacher's well-being and the students' educational outcomes.

Furthermore, the lack of prior skill in a subject such as painting, which requires both theoretical knowledge and practical expertise, can lead to a lack of confidence in teaching. Self-efficacy, or an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks effectively, plays a crucial role in teaching success. According to Bandura (1997), teachers who lack self-efficacy in a subject are less likely to engage students effectively or create a productive learning environment. In this case, the informant may feel less competent to teach painting, leading to a potential decrease in student motivation and engagement in the subject.

This challenge is not limited to teachers without specialized training in the arts or humanities. It is a broader issue that affects teachers across various subjects. Teachers who have not been properly trained in a subject are more likely to rely on surface-level knowledge or instructional methods that are not suitable for deep learning, thus reducing the effectiveness of the educational process.

The situation described also highlights the need for ongoing professional development. Teachers who are required to teach content outside their area of expertise must be provided with appropriate support, including professional development opportunities, resources, and mentorship. For the informant, attending workshops or training on MAPEH could provide the tools needed to teach the subject

more effectively and with greater confidence.

In summary, teaching without prior content knowledge or skills presents significant challenges for educators. It can lead to feelings of inadequacy, increased workload, and reduced teaching effectiveness, which can negatively impact both the teacher and the students. Providing teachers with appropriate professional development and resources is essential to overcoming these challenges and ensuring that they are well-equipped to teach across a variety of subjects with confidence and competence.

Table 10. *Absence of Reliable Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms*

Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
Absence of Reliable Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms	The informant said that feedbacks affect student motivation to work harder.

This underscores the pivotal role that timely, constructive, and personalized feedback plays in enhancing student engagement and academic performance. The informant's observations—highlighting issues such as delayed return of test papers and lack of clarity regarding assessment outcomes—reflect broader concerns in educational settings where insufficient feedback can lead to student demotivation and disengagement.

Research consistently emphasizes that timely and constructive feedback is essential for fostering student motivation. A study by Fisher et al. (2025) found that students reported significantly lower motivation levels when feedback was provided more than 10 days after submission, underscoring the importance of prompt responses in maintaining student engagement. Similarly, Younis et al. (2021) demonstrated that constructive feedback, delivered in a timely manner, positively influences academic performance by providing students with clear guidance on their strengths and areas for improvement.

The informant noted that providing immediate feedback positively impacted student attendance. This observation is supported by research indicating that timely and meaningful feedback can increase student engagement and participation. For instance, Suraworachet et al. (2022) found that combining human and analytics-based feedback led to higher engagement and improved performance in reflective writing tasks, particularly among students with lower self-regulated learning skills.

Table 11. *Improvement in Learner engagement and involvement*

Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
Improvement in Learner engagement and involvement	The informant mentioned how there is a change in student engagement and monitoring in the Open High School System. The informant mentioned about student behavior and participation.

This captures the evolving experiences and perceptions of learners and their guardians regarding active participation in the Open High School Program (OHSP). The statements from the informant reflect significant improvements in student engagement, which can be attributed to systemic changes, enhanced teacher support, and an inclusive environment that values both academic and extracurricular participation.

One of the most notable developments is the introduction of dedicated advisers who provide closer monitoring and guidance for OHSP learners. This structural improvement supports stronger student-teacher relationships, a key factor in boosting student engagement. According to Wentzel and Brophy (2014), teacher support and interpersonal relationships are strongly linked to increased motivation and student involvement, particularly in alternative education settings.

Additionally, the informant's observation that students are now participating more actively in school activities aligns with research emphasizing the importance of meaningful involvement in both academic and non-academic experiences. The mention of participation in events like the Junior-Senior Prom and sports activities suggests an increase in emotional and behavioral engagement, which are crucial for student development and retention in school.

The emotional nuance shared by the informant—such as their child enduring discomfort by wearing wrinkled clothes to school or appreciating the teacher's gesture of giving snacks—highlights the resilience and gratitude of learners in challenging circumstances. These small but significant acts contribute to a culture of care, which fosters stronger school connectedness. According to McWhirter et al. (2022), when students perceive their school environment as caring and supportive, they are more likely to engage positively and persist in their education despite socio-economic challenges.

Furthermore, the sense of pride expressed by the parent regarding their child's involvement in school activities indicates increased parental engagement, which is also a key factor in learner success. Fan and Williams (2010) found that parental perceptions and support can significantly affect a student's academic motivation and sense of belonging in school.

However, the informant also acknowledged that not all students are equally engaged, pointing to existing gaps in participation. This emphasizes the need for continuous efforts to create equitable opportunities that address barriers such as poverty, self-esteem, or academic difficulties.

Table 12. *Inconsistency in Teaching Presence and Instructional Clarity*

Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
Inconsistency in Teaching Presence and Instructional Clarity	The informants commented on student attendance and teacher availability in conducting lessons.
	The informants mentioned challenges with teacher absences and missed lessons.

The informant's observations underscore significant challenges in instructional delivery and accessibility within the Philippine education system. Reports of teacher absenteeism, inconsistent class schedules, and rapid lesson pacing reflect systemic issues affecting student learning. A study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) revealed that in the 2023–2024 school year, students lost nearly three months of learning due to various factors, including teacher absences and non-teaching tasks assigned to educators. Such disruptions not only hinder academic progress but also contribute to students' feelings of neglect and disengagement.

Additionally, the informant's concerns about the unavailability of learning materials highlight persistent resource inadequacies. The IBON Foundation reported that since 2017, many K-12 students have faced shortages in essential learning materials, with delays in procurement and distribution exacerbating the problem. These deficiencies, coupled with inconsistent instructional delivery, impede students' ability to fully engage with the curriculum and achieve educational outcomes. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive reforms focused on improving teacher attendance, ensuring timely provision of learning resources, and enhancing the overall quality of instructional delivery.

Table 13. *Socioeconomic Factors Affecting Learning*

Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
Socioeconomic factors affecting learning	The informant expressed an opinion on the effects of financial challenges. The informant mentioned how they felt their parental support and sacrifices in studying in the OHSS.

The informant's experiences reveal how financial difficulties create significant barriers to participation and success in the Open High School System (OHSS). From sacrificing medication for school-related expenses to walking long distances due to lack of transportation or allowance, the realities shared reflect the economic hardship faced by many learners. These challenges hinder consistent class attendance, timely submission of projects, and access to necessary learning materials—factors critical in a self-directed and flexible learning environment like OHSS. According to the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II, 2025), financial insecurity continues to be a major deterrent for students in alternative learning systems, which often rely on the learner's ability to manage independent study with minimal resources. In the context of OHSS, where students are expected to take more responsibility for their own learning, such limitations exacerbate the risk of disengagement and dropouts.

Despite these challenges, the informant's account also highlights how learners and their families show resilience and creativity in navigating the demands of OHSS. They seek clarification when confused, support each other with tasks, and rely on family members for moral and financial encouragement. These community-based coping strategies demonstrate how the success of OHSS depends not only on program design but also on the socio-economic contexts of learners. However, relying solely on learner perseverance without institutional support is not sustainable. The Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS, 2023) stresses the importance of equitable support systems—such as learning material subsidies, gadget loans, and regular teacher engagement—to ensure that alternative modalities like OHSS truly offer inclusive and accessible education for all.

Table 14. *School Climate and Student Well-Being*

Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
School climate and student well-being	The informants declared how they felt safe and was able to find support systems within the program.
	The informant expressed challenges in social interactions and exclusions.

The school climate within the Open High School System (OHSS) at Saint Paul University Surigao plays a crucial role in shaping student well-being. Informants consistently described the OHSS environment as peaceful, friendly, and inclusive—fostering a sense of belonging and emotional security. Students felt at ease mingling with peers and appreciated the non-hostile atmosphere, especially

when compared to more traditional public-school settings where peer conflict was more prevalent. This positive environment directly contributes to their mental health and motivation to learn, which aligns with existing research suggesting that a supportive school climate enhances academic engagement and reduces student anxiety (Carolan & Gill, 2021).

Moreover, teachers in the OHSS at SPUS are recognized for their efforts in supporting student well-being by initiating warm-up activities, offering encouragement, and helping students manage stress before diving into academic content. These relational practices reflect an emotionally responsive pedagogy, which is essential in alternative delivery modes like OHSS. According to the Department of Education (DepEd, 2023), ensuring a nurturing and learner-friendly climate is vital in retaining students in flexible learning systems, especially for those who may already be facing personal or financial hardships. The stakeholders' testimonies affirm that the positive school climate at SPUS not only enhances academic resilience but also upholds the holistic development of learners.

Table 15. *Academic Demands, Lack of Adequate Support Systems, and Perception of OHSP*

Emergent Theme	Clustered Theme
Academic Demands, Lack of Adequate Support Systems, and Perception of OHSP	The informants discussed their academic pressure and student performance while in the OHSS. The informants made comparisons toward the regular classes The informants described the OHSP structure and school environment as peaceful and an opportunity for learning

The informant's experiences within the Open High School Program (OHSP) highlight the intricate balance between academic demands and the support systems in place. Feelings of pressure, especially when undertaking leadership roles or managing assignments, underscore the challenges students face in a self-directed learning environment. However, the presence of supportive teachers who employ strategies to alleviate stress, such as initiating classes with activities that promote relaxation, demonstrates the program's commitment to student well-being. This aligns with findings from a study conducted at Rizal High School, where the OHSP was assessed as having well-planned and clearly defined goals and objectives, contributing to a structured yet flexible learning environment.

Despite these support mechanisms, students often grapple with academic challenges, including difficulties in comprehending lessons and the emotional toll of negative peer interactions. The OHSP's flexible structure, while beneficial in many respects, can sometimes lead to feelings of isolation or lack of motivation. Nevertheless, the program's design allows for individualized pacing and learning, which can be advantageous for students needing additional time or support. The Department of Education emphasizes the importance of providing alternative delivery modes to cater to diverse learner needs, ensuring that programs like the OHSP remain inclusive and responsive.

Financial considerations also play a pivotal role in students' perceptions of the OHSP. The informant's preference for the program stems from its reduced financial burden compared to traditional schooling options. This affordability makes education more accessible to students from various socio-economic backgrounds. Research indicates that the OHSP's cost-effectiveness is a significant factor in its appeal, particularly for learners who might otherwise be unable to pursue secondary education due to financial constraints.

Furthermore, the social environment within the OHSP appears to foster a sense of community and belonging. The informant notes the friendliness of peers and the ease of interaction, contributing to a less stressful and more supportive educational experience. Such an environment is crucial for student engagement and retention, as positive social interactions can enhance motivation and academic performance. The program's emphasis on creating a peaceful and inclusive atmosphere aligns with its overarching goal of providing a conducive learning space for all students.
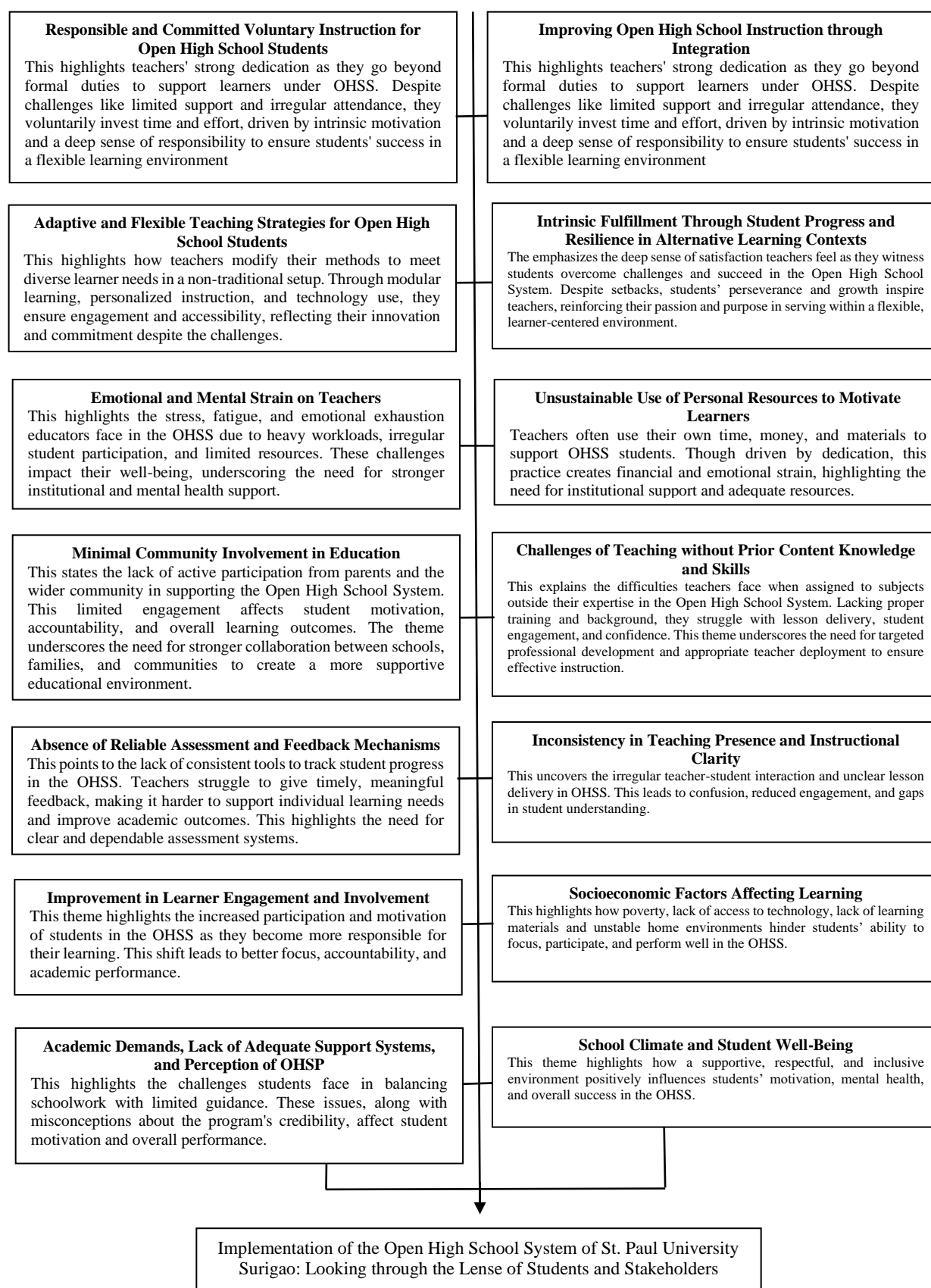
Responsible and Committed Voluntary Instruction for Open High School Students
This highlights teachers' strong dedication as they go beyond formal duties to support learners under OHSS. Despite challenges like limited support and irregular attendance, they voluntarily invest time and effort, driven by intrinsic motivation and a deep sense of responsibility to ensure students' success in a flexible learning environment

Improving Open High School Instruction through Integration
This highlights teachers' strong dedication as they go beyond formal duties to support learners under OHSS. Despite challenges like limited support and irregular attendance, they voluntarily invest time and effort, driven by intrinsic motivation and a deep sense of responsibility to ensure students' success in a flexible learning environment

Adaptive and Flexible Teaching Strategies for Open High School Students
This highlights how teachers modify their methods to meet diverse learner needs in a non-traditional setup. Through modular learning, personalized instruction, and technology use, they ensure engagement and accessibility, reflecting their innovation and commitment despite the challenges.

Intrinsic Fulfillment Through Student Progress and Resilience in Alternative Learning Contexts
The emphasizes the deep sense of satisfaction teachers feel as they witness students overcome challenges and succeed in the Open High School System. Despite setbacks, students' perseverance and growth inspire teachers, reinforcing their passion and purpose in serving within a flexible, learner-centered environment.

Emotional and Mental Strain on Teachers
This highlights the stress, fatigue, and emotional exhaustion educators face in the OHSS due to heavy workloads, irregular student participation, and limited resources. These challenges impact their well-being, underscoring the need for stronger institutional and mental health support.

Unsustainable Use of Personal Resources to Motivate Learners
Teachers often use their own time, money, and materials to support OHSS students. Though driven by dedication, this practice creates financial and emotional strain, highlighting the need for institutional support and adequate resources.

Minimal Community Involvement in Education
This states the lack of active participation from parents and the wider community in supporting the Open High School System. This limited engagement affects student motivation, accountability, and overall learning outcomes. The theme underscores the need for stronger collaboration between schools, families, and communities to create a more supportive educational environment.

Challenges of Teaching without Prior Content Knowledge and Skills
This explains the difficulties teachers face when assigned to subjects outside their expertise in the Open High School System. Lacking proper training and background, they struggle with lesson delivery, student engagement, and confidence. This theme underscores the need for targeted professional development and appropriate teacher deployment to ensure effective instruction.

Absence of Reliable Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms
This points to the lack of consistent tools to track student progress in the OHSS. Teachers struggle to give timely, meaningful feedback, making it harder to support individual learning needs and improve academic outcomes. This highlights the need for clear and dependable assessment systems.

Inconsistency in Teaching Presence and Instructional Clarity
This uncovers the irregular teacher-student interaction and unclear lesson delivery in OHSS. This leads to confusion, reduced engagement, and gaps in student understanding.

Improvement in Learner Engagement and Involvement
This theme highlights the increased participation and motivation of students in the OHSS as they become more responsible for their learning. This shift leads to better focus, accountability, and academic performance.

Socioeconomic Factors Affecting Learning
This highlights how poverty, lack of access to technology, lack of learning materials and unstable home environments hinder students' ability to focus, participate, and perform well in the OHSS.

Academic Demands, Lack of Adequate Support Systems, and Perception of OHSP
This highlights the challenges students face in balancing schoolwork with limited guidance. These issues, along with misconceptions about the program's credibility, affect student motivation and overall performance.

School Climate and Student Well-Being
This theme highlights how a supportive, respectful, and inclusive environment positively influences students' motivation, mental health, and overall success in the OHSS.

Implementation of the Open High School System of St. Paul University Surigao: Looking through the Lense of Students and Stakeholders

Figure 3. *Thematic Map of the Implementation of the Open High School System of St. Paul University Surigao: Looking through the Lens of Students and Stakeholders*
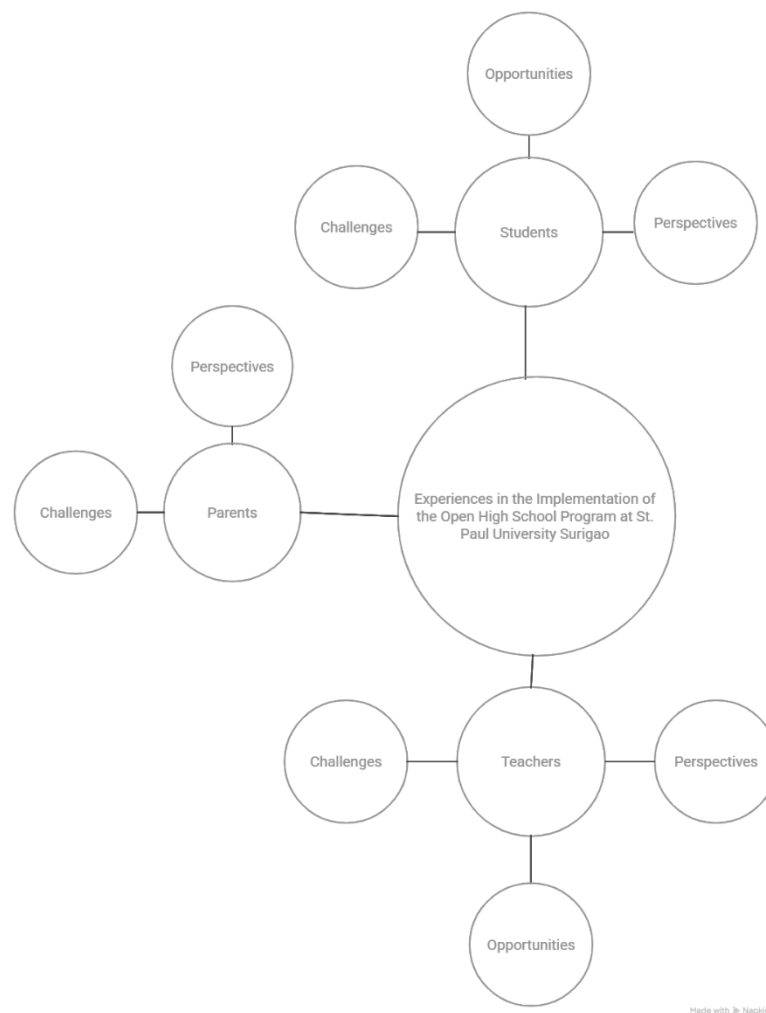
Figure 4. *Thematic Map of the Implementation of the Open High School System of St. Paul University Surigao: Looking through the Lens of Students and Stakeholders*

Table 16. *Summary of Themes*

	NEGATIVE	POSITVE
STUDENTS	Socioeconomic factors affecting learning Inconsistency in Teaching Presence and Instructional Clarity Academic demands, lack of adequate support systems, and perception of OHSP	School climate and student well-being Improving Open High School instruction through integration
TEACHERS	Absence of Reliable Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms Challenges of teaching without prior content knowledge and skills Unsustainable Use of Personal Resources to Motivate Learners Emotional and Mental Strain on Teachers	Intrinsic Fulfillment Through Student Progress and Resilience in Alternative Learning Contexts Improving Open High School instruction through integration Adaptive and flexible teaching strategies for Open High School students. Responsible and committed voluntary instruction for Open High School students - Teachers
PARENTS	Socioeconomic factors affecting learning Minimal Community involvement in Education Academic demands, lack of adequate support systems, and perception of OHSP	Improvement in Learner engagement and involvement

Conclusions

The experiences of students and stakeholders in the implementation of the Open High School System in Saint Paul University Surigao include the following:

From the students' perspective, there has been a noticeable improvement in engagement and participation following the assignment of a dedicated adviser. However, students still face considerable academic pressure despite the program's flexible nature. Fast-paced lessons and language barriers contribute to confusion and difficulty in understanding the content.

For teachers, a major concern is the unsustainable use of personal resources to support student needs. Many educators go beyond their responsibilities by providing snacks, meals, and other motivational tools from their finances. Additionally, frequent issues with teacher availability have led to inconsistent lesson delivery, affecting the continuity and effectiveness of instruction.

For parents, the program is viewed positively, with many expressing satisfaction regarding the safety and quality of education their children receive through OHSS. Nevertheless, financial challenges remain evident, as parents are still burdened by school-related expenses despite the program being marketed as free.

Based on the findings and conclusions, this study illuminated new insights on the phenomenon as follows:

The school may consider assigning dedicated academic advisers or counselors to provide more individualized assistance and guidance.

The program may implement anti-bullying policies, social-emotional learning programs, or regular activities that encourage inclusivity and foster positive peer relationships.

There is a need to further evaluate the OHSP structure. This may involve revisiting how subjects are delivered, and the frequency of class.

This financial burden needs to be addressed to ensure that students, particularly those from low-income families, can participate fully in the program without or at least with minimal financial strain.

There is a need for consistent teacher attendance and instructional delivery.

There is a need to further strengthen support systems, particularly for students who may struggle academically or face socioeconomic challenges.

Future researchers may conduct more study involving the program heads and middle managers to gather more insight on the implementation and improvement of the Open High School System.

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