Full Length Research Article

GRADING SYSTEM FOR ACADEMIC SCHOLARS: PHENOMENOLOGY OF STUDENTS DISCONTENTMENT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of academic scholars' discontentment as regards the grading system in their school and describe their insight to share to their peers and to the academe in general. Phenomenological approach was utilized with 20 academic scholars from General Santos City and Sarangani Province college institution, Philippines for School Year 2015-2016 who were picked to undergo in depth interview and focused group discussion. The results of the interview were transcribed, translated and coded to produce themes. As regards to academic scholars' experiences, the following were the themes: intensification, optimism, reinforcement and support, indifference and diversion. As to their insights, the themes generated were benefits of scholarship, challenge of scholarship, scholarship perspective and generosity of spirit.

INTRODUCTION

"To reach the pinnacle of success, you have to cross the treacherous valley of failure and discontent"

-Debasesh Mridha-

There is a pervasive discontent in our society today. We seem to be suffering from unhappiness. We even realize that the reality differs from our expectations so we feel stress and discontent as explained by Donley (2013), this then is the real scenario in the academe nowadays. Academic scholar students felt discontented on grades received from their teachers especially if they work hard to maintain their scholarship. This struggle is legitimate among students who are deserving yet financially handicapped, longing to finish their studies. Students believe that their institution has the standard grading system that remained undisclosed to them and seemed impossible to decipher. They take on the challenge on their studies and they are seeking ways to overcome discontentment on their grades. However, Patton (2015) implied that students today believes that their efforts that matters. Everyone deserves to be praised just for showing up. Many of them get to college, they lug into the classroom a sense of academic

entitlement, and they believed that their papers and examination should be graded on how hard they've work. If they don't receive the grades they think they deserve, many take the matter up with the graders. Their feeling about quality of their work often doesn't match the reality of their performance. Grading system in many universities and colleges campuses differ from one another. Review of the research on students rating data grading system is multidimensional, reliable, and stable. It is the primary function of the instructors who teaches the course and relatively it is valid against a variety of indicators of effective teaching and unaffected variety of hypothesized as potential biases (Theal, 2001). The problem in grading system among academic scholar student was a cause of their discontentment on the grades they receive from their instructors. Normally students accept an instructor's evaluation of their work. Nevertheless, there are unfairly or improper graded. Typical complaints include prejudice, capricious, change in the course requirements, and lack of uniformity in judgement applied. When charges arise, discussion and arbitration can bring out the facts to ascertain if there is a wrong that should be righted. However, such hearing are not intended to dispute the instructor's right to make his or her own evaluation of a student work (Magneses,2012).

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study was to describe experiences of academic scholar students who are

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discontented of grades they received from their teachers. They also shared insights offered to their peers and academe as a whole. This study is able to aid in creating evaluation system that can truly respond to the needs of those who evaluate academic scholar student's performance. An additional aspect of the study is to understand what stimuli have to motivate academic scholar students how to deal with grade dissatisfaction. In this study, the intention is to listen and grasp the unfold stories of these academic scholar students as they narrated their experiences and how they able to managed discontentment and cope after experiences and how they reached their present status and the insights they can share with their experiences with other academic scholar students.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions

- How does academic scholar deal with their experiences of discontentment as regards the grading system in their school?
- What insights can academic scholars share to their peers and to the academe in general?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This section presents the research design, role of the researcher, the research participants, data collection procedure, analysis of the data, trustworthiness and ethical considerations employed in this investigation.

Research Design

In this study, descriptive qualitative method was applied. This qualitative research focuses on describing and understanding phenomenon. Description includes a detailed account of context, the activities, the participants and the process. Phenomenological concerns are researched using qualitative methods undertaken in small group discussions, analysis and in-depth interviews to uncover the participants' orientation on their experience of grades discontentment and how they cope such feeling of discontentment. The study collected data through variety techniques and used modified inductive analysis, in conjunction with the system model as analytical tool to identify and characterize important categories, dimensions and interrelationship in the phenomenon.

The methodologies used as in-depth interview, focus group discussion and note taking, giving much attention to the student's observation and experience of discontentment on the grade from their teachers and important of the emotional content to open an array of human experiences of the subject involved in the study (Tufford and Newman, 2010). In phenomenological research, the used of bracketing applied to minimize presupposition to prevent potential harmful effects of presumptions that may affect the research process, thereby improving the precision of the research study. The method examined and scrutinized the phenomena through the subjective eyes of the participants, focusing on subjectivity of reality and continually pointing out the need to understand how humans view themselves and the world around them, and on the process, the researcher set aside her personal experiences and opinion to fully grasp the experiences of the participants, identifying it essence (Creswell, 2007).

Research Participants

The informants were the 20 academic scholars' students from General Santos City and Sarangani Province. There were 12 informants for the in-depth interviews and 8 participants in the focused group discussion who participated in the study. They were college students from public and private schools, whom the researchers chosen through purposive sampling based on pre- selected criteria relevant to the research study (Richards and Morse, 2006; Saunders, 2012; Speziale and Carpenter, 2007).

Collection of Data

Prior to the conduct of the actual in-depth interviews and focused group discussion, ethical considerations was properly observed because of the importance of consent and confidentiality (Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). They pointed out that everything will be done in confidentiality, and essentially, rapport involves trust and respect for the interviewee and the information that they shares. Furthermore, we prepared a quiet room that would ensure the privacy and away from distractions. It is essential to provide them safe and comfortable environment for sharing their personal experiences. Through the interview process, we listened to the participant's descriptions and repeatedly reviewed the studied data as they were transcribed (Penner and McClement, 2008). Data collected through audio recordings of interviews were used since audio or video recording improves the accuracy of the content shared in the focus group or in-depth interview, as well as the speaker's intonations (Insites, 2007). Confidentiality was observed in all sessions and with the informants (Bricki and Green ,2007), consistently addressing them by their pseudonyms to conceal their identity.

Analysis of Data

Analysis of data in a research study involved summarizing the mass of data collected and presenting the result in a way that communicates the most important features (Hancock et al, 2007). Data were analyzed using a method which included data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification (Zang and Wildemuth,2007), adding that qualitative content analysis is any qualitative data reduction and sense- making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings. Data reduction is the abstraction of data from transcriptions, deleting data which are not important and transforming it into a comprehensible material, easily understood by many (Namely et al, 2007; Paul 2006; Suter, 2012). This pairing and sieving of data is often termed as thematic analysis, a form of sorting and categorizing. With data reduction we employed the help of expertise of professional analyst for data analysis. She helps us handle the data, retrieving and locating word phrases. The data came out consolidated and manageable after sorted and categorized. Conclusion drawing and verification was the last step of qualitative analysis. It involves going back to consider what the analyzed data mean and to assess their aftermaths for the questions at hand while verification, integrally linked conclusion drawing, required revisiting the data many times as necessary to cross-check or verify the emergent conclusion (Paul, 2006). At this point, no definite judgments were made but rather, the data were allowed to speak for themselves by the emergence of conceptual categories and descriptive

themes. These themes were usually implanted in a structure of interconnect ideas that "make sense".

Trustworthiness

To establish the trustworthiness of the study, we observed four components. These are the following: credibility, conformability, transferability and dependability.

Ethical Consideration

Our study involved academic scholar students from public and private school; they were hesitant to disclose information out of fear and withheld some data. However, we erased their fears and promoted trust. This study was guided by ethical principles as described by (Mack et al, 2005) namely: respect of person, justice consent and confidentiality.

RESULTS

Presented in this chapter are the experiences of the study participants, their insights and discernments as well the concepts which emerged from the information gleaned through in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. The following research questions made possible the production of data from the informants.

- How do academic scholars deal with their experiences of discontentment as regards the grading system in their school?
- What insights can academic scholars share to their peers and to the academe in general?

From the gathered data on the experience on the grading system of their school, five essential themes emerged were formulated. There are thematic statements that fall on the intensification, optimism, reinforcement and support, indifference and diversion. Responses to the question asked on the experiences of grades discontentment revealed that there is an intensified grading system on their school. Some of the participants in the FGD and in-depth interview had handed positive response in dealing with their feelings on calming themselves. They condition their selves that discontentment will just pass by. Majority in the FGD agreed that there is no use wallowing in discontent.

They should learn to accept it as a challenge and move on. Moreover they are aware that to overcome such feeling of discontent, being positive helps a lot. Variant member of the study informants turned out to be getting an encouragement to cope with their experiences. This meant that aside from relaying on their optimism, they get reinforcement from their love ones. They believe that neither positive words nor self-help books could ease their emotional distress, but their faith in God helps them to gather themselves and become strong again for their battle for the academic scholarship. Accordingly the experience of grade discontentment usually the burden of academic scholars who are maintaining grade. Nonetheless, those discontents of being given by lower grade are better than being a failing grade. Some informants opted to do other things to ease their feelings. They believed that there are some "comfort things "that they just have to do and their frustration will vanish. As to the insights of the academic scholars on grade discontentment, there are five essential themes that emerged based on the thematic statements of the participants.

Table 2. Essential Themes and Thematic Statements on How Academic Scholars Deal with their Experiences on the Grading System of their School

Essential Themes	Thematic Statements
Intensification	I exerted more effort and focus on my studies.
	I studied some more.
	I pushed myself harder than I did before.
	I participate more actively in class.
	I double my time studying.
	I was challenged to do better.
	I tried to be more diligent.
	I spent more time reading and studying.
	I went to the library more often.
	I persevered in my studies and calmed down my nerves.
	I communicated with teacher to know my weak points.
	I always think that discontentment will just pass by.
Optimism	I think positively to overcome such feelings.
	It's not the end of the world.
	Grades do not define a man.
	I took it as a challenge.
	I tried not to lose hope and wallow in discontent.
	I kept hoping that my next teachers will be better and more considerate.
	I turned to my parents and family for inspiration.
	I got moral, financial and spiritual support from my parents.
Reinforcement and Support	Parents freed me from house chores so I can study more.
	Their words of encouragement comforted me.
	I prayed harder to God.
	I got discouraged.
Indifference	I lost interest in the subject.
	I did nothing- just waited for the semester to be over.
	I just let things be.
	I watched inspirational videos.
	I eased frustration with cone of ice cream.
Diversion	I remedied my disappointments by watching movies and going out with friends.

The thematic themes were: Benefits of scholarship, challenges of scholarship, scholarship perspective, generosity of spirit and strength of mind and character. Participants consider their scholarship as an aid to educational pursuit. Most of them confirmed that they need it in order to ensure success for finances, their parents 'cannot suffice the demand of collegiate degree.

participants exerted more efforts in their studies. Moreover, the intensification of academic efforts shown by the scholars are high regardless the challenges and frustration they have encountered the system of their school. The traits are confirmed by Heylighen (2013). He implied that highly gifted people have essential characteristic that tend to give rise in every kind of problems.

Table 3. Themes and Thematic Statements on Insights that Academic Scholars can Share to their Peers and to the Academe in General

Essential Themes	Thematic Statements
Benefits of Scholarship	No matter what, scholarship is a gift.
	Being a student is good but being a student with academic scholarship is better.
	Scholarship is a reward to myself for hard work in school
	Scholarship is my gift to my supportive parents
	Scholarship is a financial blessing.
	Being a scholar is an honor.
	We should study very well
Challenges of Scholarship	Being a scholar entails responsibilities
	Scholars should not get easily discourage, need to be strong
	I have to think positively that I can overcome my discontent and difficulties
	We should abide by the rules and regulations of the school.
	We should respect the prescribed grading system of the school
	Passion and determination are needed to obtain scholarship
	Having brains is more attractive than physical attributes.
Scholarship Perspective	Scholars are good role models to their peers.
	Academic scholars can inspire other students.
	Academic scholar can be a role model in the academe.
	Learners should make problems as a challenge.
	We should always put education as top priority.
	I want to share my talent to others.
Generosity of spirit.	I want share my ideas, knowledge and learning to my peers.
	I would like to share strategies for getting good grade to peers.
	The tough grading system challenges me to study harder.
Strength of mind and character.	There is nothing impossible if you do your best.
	We should not be discouraged by low grades.
	Learn to communicate with your teachers.
	Know your weaknesses and strengths.
	Do not mind the pressures, just go on with the flow and do your best.
	Don't be discouraged by any problem that comes along.

The scholarship grants of the study participants are financial blessing to them, they reiterated that grant does not automatically merit them as financial assistance but they've work hard and effort in it. Fully aware of the advantage of the scholarship, the interview informants and FGD participants admitted the terrain of being a scholar. They related their feelings of grades dissatisfaction or when asked about the challenges they face having scholarship. Scholarship appeared to be challenging when it entails scholar need to thorough abide in the rules given to them and perform the responsibilities expected of them. Their feelings of disappointments on grades given by their teacher agreed that its part of a challenge of being a scholar and the only weapon they can use is their tenacity, positive attitude and ability to strive more are needed. Scholars appeared to be highly aware of the top virtues that are expected of them. Among these virtues were having brains is more attractive than the physical attribute. Accordingly, they themselves reassured that having the intellectual insight is far better than having good look, because they have obtained the financial blessings brought by their scholarship. For the academic scholars, scholarships seen to be the biggest blessings they have because not every one of their friends continued their tertiary their education for most of them quitted studying because of financial constraints.

Summary

The results of the study as revealed during the in-depth interview and focus group discussion showed that the

He also mentioned that these people fall from what Maslow's description of what he calls self-actualization personality. The fact that in spite of very different circumstances, they overlap it by the need of their projected satisfaction. Their need of satisfaction based on their cognitive competence. The result is also similar to the findings of Jacob (2013) who found out that intelligent people have insatiable curiosity. They are less motivated by reward or praise but they simply move toward their goal to be top on the top. Intelligent people are comfortable even with range of emotions or distractions. She mentioned that although they have complex and thought, they still feel intense emotions over discouragement and frustration. However, they still remain to have passion and energy to set high standard for them. Buckley (2013) described competitive people as optimistic. He further continued that their optimism would help them feel energized and able to take on the challenges in life. The data revealed that the academic scholars recognize the value and importance of their parents 'role in alighting their feelings of grade discontent. In careful analysis, their responses showed that moral and spiritual support that they got from them eased them from their feelings. In this study, Oden (2009) clearly states that intellectual people have both the desire to know and evidently possess common sense. They have greater desire to keep what they have already possessed. Exerting efforts to maintain their scholarship, the informants showed their determination to finish their studies and end it as scholar still. Most of them have fully overcome the feeling of discontent and difficulties; after all, they could not deviate from the rules of the schools because they are still

subject to its set rules and regulations. This measure is affirmed by Nordby (2002) who characterized the intellectual people as flexible in thinking and conforming. The response of the informants showed that despite their discouragement and discontentment on how their teacher computed their grades, not to mention, the irregularities of handling their academic performance, they still show highest respect to their teacher. Moreover, Soleh (2001) shared a study about hobby students also seek to please their teacher particularly the ladies. It was found out that they won't give up pleasing because if they would do so, they would think are failure. They simply don't like letting other people and think negative about them. Sometimes, their grades do not matter, their reputations, whole demeanour and how their teacher would look at them is more important.

Implications for Practice

Based on the findings, the following implications for practice are offered: On handling grade dissatisfaction. The experience of the academic scholars reflected in this study have effectuated to positive responses on the reporting and giving of grades. In view of the reported grade dissatisfaction of the academic scholars, it has established that their clamour and views are legitimate. It is the real representation of the actual scenario in the educational institution nowadays. Thus, it was also found out that only few of them report their complaints to proper authorities neither to their concerned teacher. For this reason, a study that deals on the parameters of the educational institution those address or uphold accurate reporting of grades to students may be used.

Implications for Future Research

In as much as the discontentment of grades from their teachers limited in schools, colleges and universities of Region XII particularly General Santos City and Sarangani Province, the following implication for future research may be done: Since the phenomenological study presents evidences about the informants'capacity to stand up in dealing with discontentment of grades received from their teachers, future research may conducted investigating the setbacks of students who were previously academic scholars, yet have lost the privileged because of grade inaccuracy. A future research on how to deal and manage the grade discontent among college students could sprout out from this study which has shown experiences on grade dissatisfaction. The findings of this study were viewed from the lens of academic scholars, thus another research that makes teachers as respondents would be another legitimate venture.

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