

Motivational Factors and Learning Approaches of Academically-Challenged BTLED Students in Davao Del Norte State College

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Abstract: This qualitative phenomenological study investigates the motivational factors and learning approaches of academically-challenged Second-year and Third-year Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLED) students at Davao Del Norte State College. These students, having received failing grades and been advised to shift programs, exemplify a remarkable commitment to their chosen course. Recognizing that academic journeys are often non-linear and fraught with obstacles like poor academic performance, the study addresses the critical need to understand student perseverance in the face of such adversity. Guided by Self-Determination Theory, Attribution Theory, and Self-Efficacy Theory, this research aimed to answer: 1) What motivational factors keep academically-challenged BTLED students engaged and striving for success? 2) What learning approaches do they utilize? and 3) What are their insights on staying in the BTLED program? Employing In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) with approximately 10 participants, data was collected during the academic year 2023-2024. The study focused on participants' lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and strategies for sustained academic competence. Preliminary findings indicate that intrinsic motivation, coupled with strong support systems from family and teachers, are key motivational factors. Students frequently employ adaptive learning approaches, including enhanced time management and seeking peer assistance, demonstrating significant resilience and a deep-seated commitment to their chosen field despite setbacks. Their insights reveal a transformative journey where academic challenges fostered greater self-awareness and determination. This study offers valuable insights for educators and institutions, enabling the development of targeted interventions and support systems to foster academic success and resilience in similar student populations.

Keywords: Academically-Challenge, Motivation, Self-Paced Learning, Teacher Support.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of higher education, students frequently face a variety of difficulties and roadblocks on their path to their desired courses. The difficulty such as pursuing the course even if achieving academic goals is usually not a linear progression, some students have to face the depressing fact that they have failed twice as well as the motivational factors why they get failure grades and become a reason of advised to shift. Even in the face of these obstacles, a significant portion of students demonstrate an unflinching commitment to

pursuing their chosen path, going against the grain and triumphing over hardship. This failure comes with a host of negative cognitive, emotional, and behavioral result that affect student's well-being, engagement, and academic success (Ryan et al., 2021).

The study understands the complicated nature of educational journeys requires examining the issue of continuing with a course despite facing problem like failing grades and advised to shift. Though it's common to see academic achievement shown as a linear progression, students

actually experience a various obstacles that can worry this path. Knowing the reasons behind failing grades and course transfer recommendations helps students overcome obstacles in the educational system and identifies areas in which support services are required. Students who experience adversity “may be more malleable—and stand to benefit most—in the context of supportive, enriched environmental supports and interventions” (Cantor et al., 2018, p. 9). In addition to the statement, the way of addressing this problem is to show motivational support coming from the teachers to decrease the case of failing grades and advised to shift in order to keep the interest of students and pursue the course they want. Moreover, it will be a gateway for students who experienced it to realize their mistake and become more flexible and enthusiast to achieve the course they want.

There is a history of research that correlates failure with entry sources or other characteristics of students. One strand of the existing literature seeks to classify students who fail. The most common dispositional factors that contributed to failure were poor time management, lack of interest in the course, difficulty understanding the material, and personal lifestyle. Some prevalent situational factors included mental or physical health, financial responsibilities, and family responsibilities (Ajjawi et al., 2020). Student failure can be caused by individual factors such as poor preparation, weak study habits, low confidence, learning challenges, and not dedicating enough time to schoolwork.

Unfortunately, a notable percentage of students either drop out or face expulsion due to persistently poor academic performance, ultimately failing to obtain a degree. Freshman year is particularly susceptible to dropout rates, often attributed to academic difficulties (Abdulghani et al., 2023). As a result, universities must identify the root causes of poor performance and implement various strategies to support struggling students in catching up with their peers. Within these stages, various remedial activities can be employed to assist students facing academic challenges, including re-testing, tutoring, academic advising, computer-assisted interventions, and the option to drop a course (Drew, 2022).

Basic classification of motivation: “Motivation resources and problems determine students’ internal, external, and negative motivation.” (Yardimci, et al., 2017) Internal motivation – deals with the fact that the student learns because he or she is interested in a topic issue, and other activities. Student works actively and independently without pay pledges or guaranteed praise or a threat of penalty. External motivation - Students learn primarily because they want to get some external reward or in order to avoid punishment for failure in performing the task.”

II. METHOD

➤ Study Participants

The participants of this study were ten Second-year and Third-year BTLED students from Davao del Norte State College who were identified as academically challenged. They met specific criteria such as receiving grades between 2.5 and 2.75 or accumulating at least nine failing units, yet still chose to remain in the BTLED program despite being advised to shift to another course. This classification aligns with academic standing standards, where a grade of 2.00 or “C” is the minimum passing mark (Westrick et al., 2023).

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, also known as judgmental sampling (Creswell, 2018), ensuring that each participant had directly experienced the phenomenon being studied and possessed the motivation to continue in the program due to their passion or long-term goals. Those who maintained high academic performance despite challenges were excluded. Identification and recruitment of participants were made possible through collaboration with the program chairperson. The sample size of ten is within the ideal range for phenomenological research, as recommended by Creswell (2013).

➤ Materials and Instruments

The primary instrument for this research was the interview guide used during individual In-Depth Interviews (IDIs). The guide contained open-ended questions designed to explore participants’ lived experiences, motivations, and coping strategies. Before its administered, the guide was reviewed by the adviser and research panel to ensure clarity and relevance. A formal request for permission to conduct the study was also secured from the institution. The use of IDIs allowed participants to provide rich, detailed narratives, which were later used to identify recurring themes and patterns (Rutledge, 2020). The interviews lasted approximately 15–20 minutes and were conducted in May 2024.

➤ Design and Procedure

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to capture the essence of the lived experiences of academically-challenged BTLED students. This approach enabled the researchers to understand the phenomenon from the participants’ own perspectives within their natural academic context (Creswell, 2007).

The researchers served as the primary instruments of inquiry. Their role involved establishing rapport with participants, securing informed consent, maintaining ethical standards, and conducting interviews in a safe, respectful manner. Narrative analysis was applied to the collected data, focusing on how participants recounted and made sense of their academic journeys. According to Riessman (2008), narrative analysis emphasizes the importance of stories in

conveying individual experiences and social realities, making it suitable for this phenomenological study.

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the research process, the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were applied (Akhter et al., 2023). Credibility was achieved by presenting detailed and accurate participant narratives. Transferability was ensured through rich contextual descriptions. Dependability was maintained by applying consistent procedures, and confirmability was guaranteed by grounding the findings in participants' actual responses, minimizing researcher bias.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Davao del Norte State College. All participants signed informed consent forms that outlined the purpose, procedures, confidentiality safeguards, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Pseudonyms were used in transcripts and reporting to protect identities and uphold participant dignity.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter encompasses the data gathered by the researchers. The data captures the experiences of second-year and third-year BTLED students who face academic challenges. The information was collected through in-depth interviews to unveil the motivational factors and learning approaches of these academically challenged students. Specifically, the study focuses on BTLED students who have experienced failing grades and received advice to shift to a different program but chose to remain in their chosen field.

➤ *Motivational Factors that Drive the Academically-Challenged Students on Studying in BTLED Program.*

Motivational factors that drive the academically-challenged students refers to the different reasons, influences, or sources of encouragement that push students who may struggle in their academic performance to keep going, stay in school, and work toward improvement and success. There were 2 essential themes that emerged from this question about what are their Motivational factors as to why these students have to pursue the BTLED program. The generated themes are as follows: *Influence of Family Support System, Personal passion and Career aspirations.*

Table 1. Motivational Factors that Drive the Academically-Challenged Students on Studying in BTLED Program.

ESSENTIAL THEMES	CORE IDEAS
Influence of Family Support System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family serves as a primary source of motivation and strength, driving the individual to pursue their education for a better future. An aunt's influence introduces the individual to a program that enhances their skills and self-discovery. Support from siblings and a life partner encourages resilience and determination, even in the face of academic setbacks. Parents' hard work serves as a driving force for the individual to excel in their education and make them proud. Family and friends collectively contribute to the individual's motivation, along with the guidance and assistance provided by teachers and classmates.
Personal Passion and Career Aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual's personal interest and determination drive them to continue their program despite setbacks, recognizing progress and learning from past challenges. Despite external advice to shift, the individual remains dedicated to their goal of completing the program, asserting their commitment to their own decisions. Personal motivation stems from a desire to achieve professionalism in their chosen field, inspired by the example of at least one professional family member.

➤ *Learning Approaches*

Academically-challenged students may not always learn in the traditional or expected ways, but many develop or adopt specific learning approaches to help them cope with their difficulties and succeed. These approaches allow them to manage academic tasks more effectively despite personal or cognitive struggles. In table 2 contains the themes that emerged from these questions, highlighting the learning approaches that these academically-challenged students utilized to overcome academic hurdles. The generated themes are as follows: *Self-Paced Learning, Group Study, and Teacher Support.*

Table 2. Learning Approaches Utilized by Academically-Challenged Students to Overcome Academic Challenges in the BTLED Program.

ESSENTIAL THEMES	CORE IDEAS
Self-Paced Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual finds motivation in self-paced learning through online resources like websites and YouTube, driven by their daily sacrifices and the support of their family. Preferring self-learning, the individual utilizes unconventional methods such as reading to stay engaged, finding peaceful environments like their farm that is conducive to effective studying. Embracing self-paced learning allows the individual to tailor their study methods to their preferences, utilizing video discussions and unconventional study locations to effectively overcome academic challenges.
Group Study and Teacher Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual finds studying with others essential for sharing thoughts and knowledge, utilizing methods like reading aloud for effective learning and observing the effectiveness of group study from peers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following their teacher's advice to persevere despite failures, the individual acknowledges the importance of personal effort in academic success. Initially hesitant about choosing education, the individual's aunt, a teacher, inspires them to pursue it, leading to a realization of their own creativity and potential in the field. Teacher support plays a significant role in motivating the individual to continue their education, emphasizing the importance of acquiring skills for future employment, along with the encouragement from family. The individual's aunt, a teacher, serves as a direct inspiration for pursuing a career in education.

➤ *Insights on Maintaining Commitment to the Program*

Maintaining commitment to the BTLED (Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education) program—especially among academically-challenged students—requires more than just academic capability. It involves personal motivation, support systems, meaningful learning experiences, and a clear vision of one's goals. In table 3 contains the themes that emerged from these questions, highlighting the reasons and factors why students have pursued their BTLED course despite facing academic challenges. The generated themes are as follows: *Stay motivated to stay in the program, Develop skills for practical application, Resilience and Determination Amidst Academic Challenges and Seek support systems.*

Table 3. Emerging Themes and Core Ideas on the Academically-Challenged BTLED Students about Staying in BTLED Program

ESSENTIAL THEMES	CORE IDEAS
Stay motivated to stay in the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For self-improvement, make progress in your abilities to prove excellence in terms of TLE subjects. Avoidance of becoming an irregular student and starting over as freshmen in the BTLED program Offer various skills for students in the BTLED program that are helpful and useful in their future careers. Continuation of enhancement of skills related to the BTLED Program as TVL students in SHS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To discover the hidden skills related to the BTLED program that have not yet been discovered
Develop skills for practical application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop the skills that belong to the BTLED program that are necessary requirements for future job fields <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Molding the skills belong to the BTLED Program to apply as a dream farmer in Japan. Enhancement of Skills: It is useful to be an educator in the future and can help my students soon. Valuing the skills offered by the BTLED program as part of my growth and applying the skills soon abroad Skills related to the BTLED program will not just contribute at school; they will also provide solutions to environmental issues.

Resilience and Determination Amidst Academic Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just continue to pursue the chosen program, BTLED, despite the obstacles that have been faced. • Do not feel discouraged. Use this challenge to inspire others, make yourself proud of yourself, and strive harder. • Showing love for the BTLED program as you wish to become an educator will make you feel encouraged and motivated to achieve the goal despite the interference. • Stay positive that academically challenged will go away and that the hardships you've shown will lead to a fruitful outcome. • Always remember that problems exist, and academically- challenging is one of them. Stay learning and praying.
Seek support systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family support helps to lift you up when feeling down and provides advice on how to become a better individual. • Friends that stay at your back when problems occur, help give you comments on mistakes, and suggest solutions that are helpful • Self-support to assure someone is with you, talking to boost your confidence, and pushing yourself to pursue the dreams you want.

IV. CONCLUSION

The findings of this phenomenological study confirm Guay's (2021) assertion that motivations directly influence positive student outcomes. This research served as a cornerstone for exploring the experiences of Bachelor of Technical-Vocational Teacher Education (BTLED) students, particularly those grappling with academic difficulties and course failures. The study aimed to uncover their core motivations, the persistent obstacles they face, and the effective coping strategies they use. By capturing their unique insights, it sought to understand how students navigate academic hurdles, sustain their drive, and ultimately persevere in their chosen program despite significant setbacks. The investigation comprehensively examined general academic challenges, specific courses that pose difficulties, the underlying reasons for subject failures, and the adaptive learning approaches students adopt to stay on track. At its heart, this study strongly supports Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes the essential roles of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in driving student motivation and achievement. SDT asserts that a student's innate desire to learn flourishes when these fundamental psychological needs are fulfilled. The research indicated that while external elements can sometimes hinder a student's natural eagerness to learn, establishing settings that nurture these needs—such as student-focused lesson plans, encouraging learning environments, hands-on experiences, and strong mentorship—can substantially enhance both motivation and overall academic welfare. This insight points to a vital transition from simply depending on external rewards to fostering self-driven motivation for sustained academic accomplishment within the BTLED program. However, according to Vallerand et al. (1997), students may disengage or even drop out due to feelings of restriction, inadequacy, or a lack of motivation stemming from family, personal, peer, or teacher-related issues.

Ultimately, this research highlights the crucial interaction between internal and external motivational forces, combined with flexible learning approaches and robust support systems, in fostering perseverance among BTLED students who face academic hurdles. The results clearly demonstrate that family encouragement and personal drive are key motivators. Similarly important are the various learning methods students employ, including studying at their own pace, collaborating in groups, and seeking assistance from instructors. Despite the difficulties, students show remarkable resolve to remain in the program, motivated by a desire to avoid changing their academic path and recognizing the highly valuable practical skills they gain. This thorough understanding is essential for creating specific support initiatives and developing a more encouraging educational setting that enables all BTLED students to thrive.

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