Research, Research, *Paano Ka Ginawa?* (How Were You Made?): Lived Experiences of Senior High School Students as First-Time Researchers in the City Schools Division of Tanauan

Ismael C. Casquejo, L. P. T., Ed. D.

Department of Education

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the lived experiences of Senior High School students as first-time researchers in the City Schools Division of Tanauan. With research as a crucial subject in the curriculum, most students struggle due to their lack of prior research exposure in Junior High School. The study utilized homogeneous purposive sampling, involving 40 students across four public schools. Data collection through questionnaires and observations revealed key challenges, including difficulties in finding related literature and group collaboration. However, the process also proved rewarding, with students citing new knowledge, personal growth, and academic skills improvement as valuable outcomes. Respondents suggested interventions like step-by-step guidance, increased research time, and access to free internet resources to enhance the research experience. The study highlights the need for structured support and skill-building opportunities to help first-time researchers navigate the complexities of academic research.

Keywords: Academic Skills, First-Time Researchers, Lived Experiences, Research Education, Senior High School

INTRODUCTION OF THE RESEARCH

Research is an integral part of the Senior High School curriculum, as mandated by the Department of Education. However, it is important to note that not all students entering Senior High School have prior exposure to research, particularly those from regular junior high school programs. Research subjects are generally part of specialized tracks or programs, leaving many students as first-time researchers upon entering Senior High School. This lack of prior experience often makes the transition into research challenging.

Senior High School students are tasked with mastering several research subjects, each requiring distinct sets of skills and knowledge. Since many students have never undertaken formal research before, they must begin their academic journey as novice researchers. Conducting research involves multiple stages, each demanding attention to detail, critical thinking, and the ability to analyze data effectively. These skills, while essential, take time to develop and require systematic instruction and practice.

Despite these challenges, the importance and value of research cannot be overstated. Research in Senior High School serves to sharpen students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities—skills that are vital for success in both higher education and the workforce. Through research, students learn to explore and address real-world problems, developing competencies that will serve them well in various professional fields.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research is a foundational element of the Senior High School experience, designed to prepare students for both the rigors of college and the challenges of the workforce. Although research may be a new and unfamiliar endeavor for many students, it offers valuable opportunities to develop academic skills such as critical thinking, analysis, and effective communication. As such, research is a crucial aspect of a student's educational journey, equipping them with the necessary skills to navigate both academic and professional landscapes.

The Social Learning Theory, developed by Albert Bandura, provides a theoretical framework for understanding how students learn through observation, imitation, and modeling. According to Cherry (2022), this theory is particularly relevant in the context of research as it emphasizes the role of social interactions in the acquisition of knowledge. Students can observe and learn from their peers, mentors, and instructors, which can help mitigate the challenges they face in the research process.

Bakhshi et al. (2019) highlight the importance of writing proficiency in research. The ability to clearly articulate ideas, describe participants, and analyze data is essential for producing high-quality research. Without these skills, students may struggle to effectively convey their findings. Similarly, Otoluwa et al. (2021) stress the role of vocabulary in the research process, noting that a limited vocabulary can hinder students' ability to express their ideas and complicate their research efforts.

Bocar (2013) discusses the time management challenges associated with research. According to her findings, students often underestimate the time required for each stage of the research process, leading to unnecessary stress and suboptimal results. She emphasizes the importance of allocating additional time to ensure thorough completion of each phase, from data collection to analysis.

Recognizing the difficulty many students face as first-time researchers, Qasem and Zayid (2019) suggest that group work can alleviate some of the stress associated with research. Working in groups allows students to collaborate, share ideas, and support each other through the challenges of research. This collaborative approach can foster a sense of security and motivation, making the process less daunting. While individual research is sometimes necessary, group research is often more manageable for students new to the field.

Despite the challenges, the benefits of research are undeniable. Versoza (2019) asserts that research is a critical component of Senior High School education, as it fosters the development of essential 21st-century skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving. These skills not only prepare students for college but also equip them with the tools necessary to succeed in the workforce.

Synthesis

This study is rooted in Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which highlights the role of observation and interaction in acquiring knowledge and skills. For first-time researchers in Senior High School, observing peers and instructors is essential to developing the behaviors and attitudes necessary for effective research. Research proficiency, a cornerstone of the curriculum, requires students to learn and adapt to the challenges of academic inquiry.

Several factors influence the success of first-time researchers. Writing proficiency and vocabulary are critical, as noted by Bakhshi et al. (2019) and Otoluwa et al. (2021), who emphasize the importance of clear communication in producing meaningful research. Time management is equally significant, with Bocar (2013) advising students to allocate extra time to each research phase to ensure thoroughness. Group work, as suggested by Qasem and Zayid (2019), can also mitigate challenges, fostering collaboration and mutual support.

Despite these challenges, the benefits of research are transformative. According to Versoza (2019), research cultivates critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are invaluable for academic success and career readiness. These competencies empower students to navigate the complexities of a rapidly evolving world, making research an indispensable component of personal and professional growth.

Research Questions

1. How can the most significant experiences of Senior High School (SHS) researchers be described?

2. What challenges are encountered by SHS students as first-time researchers?

3. Which research skills of SHS students as first-time researchers need further improvement?

4. What intervention plan can be proposed for SHS students who are first-time researchers?

Scope and Limitation

This research was conducted in the City Schools Division of Tanauan during the School Year 2023-2024. The study employed a qualitative research design. Homogeneous purposive sampling was utilized to ensure the selection of respondents with shared characteristics relevant to the research objectives. The target respondents were senior high school students who had no prior experience conducting research before becoming senior high school students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Sampling

This study utilized homogeneous purposive sampling, wherein respondents were selected based on shared characteristics. For this research, the shared characteristic was being senior high school students undertaking research for the first time. Ten senior high school students from each of four public senior high schools within the City Schools Division of Tanauan were selected, resulting in a total of 40 respondents. According to Heath (2023), a sample size of 30 individuals is generally considered sufficient for qualitative research, thus ensuring the adequacy of this study's sample size.

Homogenous Purposive Sampling	
Senior High School	**Respondents**
Balele Integrated High School	10
Pantay National High School	10
Tanauan City Integrated High School	10
Tanauan School Of Fisheries	10
Total	**40**

B. Data Collection

The data collected was systematically organized and categorized based on the research questions. To gather the necessary information, the following tool was employed:

A **researcher-made questionnaire** was used to collect data. It consisted of a series of questions, primarily in printed form, designed to measure behaviors, attitudes, preferences, opinions, and intentions of the respondents. The questionnaire was submitted to the Senior Education Program Specialist - Planning & Research for validation by experts from the City Schools Division Office. Additionally, to ensure reliability, the test-retest method was employed before the instrument was utilized.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

How can the most significant experiences of Senior High School (SHS) researchers be described?

The journey of a researcher is transformative, marked by moments of achievement, learning, and collaboration. Completing a research paper represents a significant milestone, symbolizing the culmination of hard work and dedication. Many researchers express a deep sense of fulfillment and validation upon finishing their projects, with sentiments like, "Being able to complete a research" and "Finishing our paper has to be the most significant thing for me as a researcher." This accomplishment reflects not only the production of a final output but also the perseverance and effort invested throughout the process.

The research journey is also a profound learning experience, fostering the development of critical skills such as reading comprehension, problem-solving, and analytical thinking. As one informant shared, "I learned a lot, from thinking of a problem to finding the solution for it," emphasizing the creativity and resilience required to address research challenges. This process enhances intellectual curiosity, deepens purpose, and opens new avenues for exploration, equipping individuals with tools to navigate both personal and professional challenges.

Collaboration plays a pivotal role in enriching the research experience. As Qasem and Zayid (2019) suggest, group work or research groups not only reduce stress but also provide participants with a sense of security and motivation to excel in writing research. Working in groups offers fresh perspectives, fosters mutual growth, and enriches the overall process. One informant remarked, "To work together with others and view how they write," showcasing the benefits of teamwork in broadening one's approach to research. Furthermore, sharing findings contributes to the larger body of knowledge and reinforces the communal and social impact of research. Through collaboration and shared learning, the research journey becomes more than a task to be completed—it transforms into an opportunity for personal and intellectual growth, leaving a lasting legacy beyond the confines of a single project.

Codes	Themes	Transcript
- Completing the research paper - Finishing the research	Completion of Research	• Being able to complete a research. My most significant experience as a researcher was writing or finishing the research paper. Finishing our paper has to be the most significant thing for me as a researcher.
- Learning through evidence and solutions - Enhancing skills like reading comprehension	Learning and Skill Development	When I learn a lot from searching something I want an answer by finding pieces of evidence. • I learned a lot, from thinking of a problem to finding the solution for it. Also, when conducting research, I can enhance my reading comprehension. • My most significant experience was when I was just first starting out to do our research paper. From that point on, I have realized and gathered some skills that are now important when it comes to researching.
- Discovering purpose - Expanding knowledge - Discovering new areas to explore	Purpose and Knowledge Expansion	• Seek for the real purpose of the research. • One of the most significant experiences as a researcher was discovering something new to explore and to expand my knowledge.
- Collaborating with others - Sharing knowledge	Collaboration and Sharing	• To work together with others and view how they write. My most significant experience as a researcher is to learn and for others to learn from our research.

What challenges are encountered by SHS students as first-time researchers?

Conducting research often presents significant challenges, with data gathering and analysis being one of the most taxing aspects. Researchers frequently described this process as time-consuming and exhausting, emphasizing the effort required to secure sufficient and reliable data from numerous participants. One informant shared, "The most difficult experience I had was writing out the interpretation of the results that we gathered." This highlights how interpreting the results of the collected data emerged as a particularly difficult task, as it demands critical thinking and precision to ensure the findings are both accurate and meaningful. These challenges underscore the complexities of transforming raw data into valuable insights that contribute to the research objectives.

Adapting to the demands of academic research is another hurdle for many researchers. Several researchers noted the difficulty of learning new skills, such as writing research papers or brainstorming for topics. The revisions process, which often requires reworking and refining ideas, was also highlighted as particularly challenging. For novice researchers, these tasks can feel overwhelming, as they require a blend of creativity, technical skill, and resilience to meet academic standards and expectations. As Bakhshi et al. (2019) emphasize, writing proficiency plays a critical role in this process. The inability to effectively reflect the context, participants, description, and analyses in research writing can lead to poor-quality outputs. This insight underscores the importance of developing robust writing skills as a cornerstone of successful research.

Finding relevant information and formulating key research components are additional struggles researchers face. Informants identified the difficulty of locating appropriate theories and literature to support their study, with some noting limited availability of information relevant to their chosen topic. One informant explained, "For me, it's finding some information about our title; sometimes it's hard to find the information that we can find it profitable for our research." Crafting essential elements, such as the title and the Statement of the Problem, also proved to be formidable tasks. These components are foundational to a study's success, yet they require clarity, precision, and alignment with the research goals. Together, these challenges highlight the intricate and multifaceted nature of conducting meaningful research, particularly for those new to the process.

Codes	Themes	Transcript
- Gathering data - Time-consuming and exhausting process - Interpreting results	Challenges in Data Gathering and Analysis	• Gathering data and Data analysis. • The most difficult experience I had was writing out the interpretation of the results that we gathered. • Gathering data can be time-consuming and exhausting since you need a lot of respondents depending on your research.
- Adapting to writing research - Facing challenges in revisions	Adapting to New Research Skills	• For me, it was probably adapting to something new such as writing a research paper. • My most difficult experience in conducting research is brainstorming for possible topics and the revisions part.
- Difficulty finding relevant theories and literature - Limited information available	Challenges in Finding Relevant Information	• The most difficult part of conducting research is finding theories and Review of Related Literature. • For me it's finding some information about our title, sometimes it's hard to find the information that we can find it profitable for our research. • We lack information about the topic.
- Creating a title - Writing the Statement	Struggles with Formulating Key	• Creating the title.

of the Problem	Elements	I think the hardest part for me is when thinking about the Statement of the Problem.

Which research skills of SHS students as first-time researchers need further improvement?

Effective research demands a wide range of skills, and researchers often identify areas for improvement to enhance the quality of their work. Comprehension and language skills emerge as fundamental areas needing development, as many researchers find it challenging to understand complex sentences quickly, which can hinder their ability to analyze literature and articulate ideas. One informant acknowledged, "The skills I probably need to improve are my writing, comprehension, and language editing." Writing and language editing, particularly for essays and formal papers, are also common difficulties, making the enhancement of these skills vital for clear and effective research communication.

According to Versoza (2019), research is one of the subjects in senior high school that aims to develop the student's critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This objective aligns with the need to strengthen foundational skills like comprehension, writing, and analysis, which are essential for navigating academic texts and effectively presenting ideas. Strong comprehension abilities enable researchers to engage deeply with complex materials, while proficient writing skills ensure their findings meet academic standards and are communicated clearly.

Presentation skills are another crucial area for growth, as they play a significant role in sharing research findings. Researchers often highlight the importance of presenting with clarity and confidence, which requires understanding and effectively articulating the purpose of their research. Effective presentations not only showcase the researcher's efforts but also ensure that their work resonates with the audience. Developing these skills involves practice, familiarity with the research content, and strategies to manage public speaking challenges, enabling researchers to convey their findings persuasively.

Data gathering and referencing skills are also critical for successful research. One informant shared, "For me, it's data gathering because as a researcher, I need to develop my data gathering skills to find quickly about the topic I seek." Challenges such as identifying reliable sources and ensuring proper citations often arise, impacting the credibility and accuracy of research. Strengthening data collection techniques and improving referencing practices are essential steps toward producing impactful and trustworthy studies. By focusing on these interconnected areas, senior high school students can cultivate the comprehensive skill set necessary for academic success and personal growth in research.

Codes	Themes	Transcript
- Comprehension skills - Writing skills - Language editing skills	Comprehension and Language Skills	• Comprehension because it is hard for me to understand sentences in a short manner of time. • The skills I probably need to improve are my writing, comprehension, and language editing. • Writing and Language Editing. Writing is one of my weaknesses, especially when making an essay. Comprehension, because my English comprehension is not that good yet and I still need to improve it.
- Presentation skills - Confidence in	Presentation Skills	I think the presentation since presenting research is you need to know what's really the purpose of your research.

presenting research		• I want to improve my presentation because I am a little bit struggling in my presentation skills. Presenting is important, as it shows how much effort you put into the research.
- Data gathering - Accuracy and efficiency in finding information	Data Gathering and Analysis	For me it's data gathering because as a researcher, I need to develop my data gathering skills to find quickly about the topic I seek. I think it is Data Gathering because sometimes, I do not know if I am doing the right thing in our research. I am also unsure whether the information I am finding and gathering are okay and trusted.
- Referencing - Using reliable and beneficial references	Referencing Skills	• Referencing, for me it's hard to get references from the internet that you really benefit from.

What intervention plan can be proposed for SHS students who are first-time researchers?

Intervention Plan

Objectives	Activities	Time Frame	Resources Needed	Persons Involved	Success Indicator
1. To enhance students' **data gathering and analysis skills**.	- Conduct workshops on research methodology and statistical tools.	1 week (5 sessions)	- Resource speakers, laptops, statistical software (e.g., SPSS/Excel), worksheets.	- Subject teachers, resource speakers, students.	- At least 80% of students can conduct accurate data gathering and apply basic analysis techniques in activities.
2. To help students adapt to **new research skills**.	- Organize hands-on activities on creating research instruments (e.g., surveys, interview guides).	1 week (3 sessions)	- Handouts, examples of instruments, projectors, internet access.	- Research mentors, teachers, students.	- 90% of students can design and validate appropriate research instruments.
3. To improve skills in **finding relevant information** for research.	- Teach database search strategies and proper keyword formulation.	3 days (2-hour sessions)	- Access to research databases, guides to credible online sources, library resources.	- Librarians, ICT specialists, teachers, students.	- Students can locate and cite 3-5 credible sources for their research work.
4. To strengthen students' **formulating key elements** of research.	- Host a seminar on writing research problems, objectives, and questions.	2 days	- Templates, sample research papers, writing guides.	- Research advisers, guest speakers, students.	- Students demonstrate proficiency in drafting clear and specific research elements.

5. To enhance **comprehension and language skills**.	- Implement reading and summarizing activities, including paraphrasing exercises.	Ongoing (weekly)	- Articles, comprehension tests, rubrics for evaluation.	- English teachers, students.	- 80% of students show improved comprehension scores in assessments.
6. To improve **presentation skills**.	- Conduct training on effective communication, use of visual aids, and handling Q&A sessions.	2 weeks (4 sessions)	- Presentation software (e.g., PowerPoint), audio-visual equipment.	- English and research teachers, resource persons, students.	- Students deliver a presentation evaluated as satisfactory or better by a rubric.
7. To build proficiency in **referencing and citation**.	- Conduct practical sessions on citation styles (e.g., APA, MLA).	1 week (3 sessions)	- Citation guides, sample research papers, referencing tools (e.g., Zotero).	- Research advisers, students.	- 90% of students accurately use a citation style in their work.

This intervention plan is designed to enhance students' research skills through a series of structured and targeted activities. To improve data gathering and analysis capabilities, workshops on research methodologies and statistical tools will be conducted over a week. Students will gain hands-on experience with tools like SPSS or Excel, enabling them to conduct accurate data collection and basic analysis, with an 80% success target for competency in these areas. Complementary to this, hands-on sessions on designing and validating research instruments, such as surveys and interview guides, will strengthen adaptability to research processes, aiming for a 90% proficiency rate among participants.

To build foundational research skills, students will participate in activities focusing on locating credible sources and formulating key research elements. Database search strategies, keyword formulation, and proper referencing techniques (e.g., APA, MLA) will be covered in workshops led by librarians, ICT specialists, and research mentors. This will ensure students can independently find relevant information and accurately cite sources, with an expected outcome of students citing 3–5 credible references in their work. Additionally, seminars on drafting research problems, objectives, and questions will solidify their ability to craft clear and specific research elements.

Lastly, to enhance comprehension, language, and presentation skills, the plan incorporates weekly reading and summarizing exercises, along with training sessions on effective communication and visual aid usage. Students will improve their ability to paraphrase, summarize, and deliver polished presentations confidently, supported by structured rubrics for evaluation. The overall success of the intervention will be measured by improved comprehension scores, accurate referencing, and satisfactory presentation evaluations, ensuring a holistic development of research competencies.

CONCLUSIONS

The most significant experiences as researchers often revolve around completing the research process, acquiring new skills, and expanding knowledge.

Researchers often face significant challenges, including data gathering and analysis, adapting to new skills, and formulating essential elements like the title and Statement of the Problem.

Researchers often face challenges in comprehension, writing, presentation, data gathering, and referencing, highlighting the need for continuous skill development to improve the overall quality and effectiveness of their work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Researchers may focus on reflecting on their learning journey and embracing opportunities for collaboration and skill enhancement to further enrich their research experiences and contributions.

Researchers may benefit from structured guidance, such as workshops or mentoring, to strengthen their skills in data analysis, literature review, and crafting key research components. This support may help them navigate challenges more effectively and achieve better outcomes.

Researchers may focus on targeted training or workshops to enhance their comprehension, writing, and presentation skills, and may utilize reliable tools and resources to improve data gathering and referencing practices.

REFERENCES

1. Bakhshi, H., Weisi, H., & Yousofi, N. (2019). Challenges of Conducting Qualitative
2. Research in the Iranian Higher Education: Voices from ELT Faculty Members. Iranian Journal of Comparative Education 2019, 2(2), 244-277. DOI: 10.22034/IJCE.2020.103674
3. Bocar, A. (2013). Difficulties Encountered by the Student – Researchers and the Effects on Their Research Output. SSRN Electronic Journal. DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.1612050
4. Cherry K. (2022, October 14). How Social Learning Theory Works. Very Well Mind. https://www.verywellmind.com/social-learning-theory-2795074
5. Heath, C. (2023, February 5) What is purposive sampling? Dovetail https://dovetail.com/research/purposive-sampling/
6. Qasem, F. & Zayid E. (2019). The Challenges and Problems Faced by Students in the Early Stage of Writing Research Projects in L2, University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. European Journal of Special Education Research, 4(1), 32-47. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.2557036
7. Otoluwa, M., Tambengi, W. & Tambengi, H. (2021). An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Conducting the Scientific Research: A Case of Study of English Education Study Program and Economic Education Study Program of Universitas Negeri Gorontalo in Indonesia. International Journal of English Language Studies (IJELS). DOI: 10.32996/ijels
8. Versoza, N. (2019). Problems Encountered in Doing Research by the Grade 12 Students of Schools in San Manuel District, San Manuel, Isabela S.Y. 2018-2019. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3350241